

“On Anger, Silence, and Epistemic Injustice”

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Abstract: If anger is the emotion of injustice, and if most injustices have prominent epistemic dimensions, then where is the anger in epistemic injustice? Despite the question my task is not to account for the lack of attention to anger in epistemic injustice discussions. Instead, I argue that a particular texture of transformative anger – a *knowing resistant anger* – offers marginalized knowers a powerful resource for countering epistemic injustice. I begin by making visible the anger that saturates the silences that epistemic injustices repeatedly manufacture and explain the obvious: silencing practices produce angry experiences. I focus on *tone policing* and *tone vigilance* to illustrate the relationship between silencing and angry knowledge management. Next, I use María Lugones’s pluralist account of anger to bring out the epistemic dimensions of knowing resistant anger in a way that also calls attention to their histories and felt textures. The final section draws on feminist scholarship about the transformative power of angry knowledge to suggest how it might serve as a resource for resisting epistemic injustice.

1. Introduction

Anger is the emotion of injustice.¹ Historically, members subordinated groups have defended our anger as a morally and politically appropriate response to daily injustices. Our anger surfaces quickly pulling us back into our bodies. This is how injustice *feels*. Those of us who live in *epistemic twilight zones*; that is, in worlds where testimony about our lived experiences is repeatedly silenced, dismissed, distorted, or gas lighted are familiar with the ever-present anger these constant erasures trigger.² Historically, discussions of anger and injustice have focused on the political uses of anger; but, as Kristie Dotson once remarked, ‘All injustices are epistemic at root’.³ So, I’m curious: if anger is the emotion of injustice, and if injustices have prominent epistemic dimensions, then where is the anger in epistemic injustice? Despite the question, my project is not to explain the lack of attention to anger in the epistemic injustice literature. Instead I argue that a particular texture of anger – a *knowing resistant anger* – offers marginalized knowers a powerful resource for countering epistemic injustices. I begin by making visible the anger that saturates the complex silences that epistemic injustices repeatedly manufacture. I outline four silencing practices to illustrate the obvious point that social practices of silencing produce angry experiences. Next, I introduce two additional silencing practices – *tone policing* and *tone vigilance*

¹ As Aristotle’s says, ‘anger is an appropriate response to perceived injustice’. *Nicomachean Ethics* V.8 1135b28-9.

² Alison Bailey, ‘The Unlevel Knowing Field: An Engagement with Dotson’s Third-Order Epistemic Oppression.’ *Social Epistemology Review and Reply Collective* 3:10 (2014), 62-68. Online: <http://wp.me/p1Bfg0-1Gs> ‘Epistemic twilight zones’ are undefined or intermediate conceptual areas where there are insufficient or inadequate epistemic resources. Here, epistemic resources are not shared as much as people think.

³ Dotson, in conversation. Dotson’s claim is intentionally strong. Unpacking the ‘all’ is beyond the scope of this project. I ask readers to feel the weight of the *all* in Dotson’s claim by considering how the epistemological dimensions of violence are integral to the process of dehumanization: Reducing knowing subjects to dehumanized subjects or objects (i.e. non-citizens, property, animals, savages, criminals, etc.) is the first step toward doing violence to them. Charles W. Mills makes a weaker claim: the historical production of the racial contract has *prominent* epistemic dimensions. See, *The Racial Contract* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1997).

– because they best illustrate the intimate relationship between silencing and angry knowledge management. My third section uses María Lugones’s pluralist account of anger to bring out the epistemic dimensions of knowing resistant anger in a way that also calls attention to the histories and textures of this anger. Anger is powerful resource for resisting epistemic injustice. Anger does things. Anger can be a claim to respect. It offers us clarity. And, it is useful for mapping epistemic terrains. Anger calls attention to bad epistemic habits. It prompts us to seek out resistant epistemic communities and new worlds of sense where our epistemic confidence can be restored.

2. Anger is a Justified Response to Social Practices of Silencing

Social practices of silencing produce angry experiences. So, my first task is to make visible the overlooked and undertheorized resistant anger saturating the silences that epistemic injustice repeatedly manufactures. All testimonial exchanges take place on an *uneven knowing field*; that is, ‘on contested terrains where knowledge and ignorance circulate with equal vigor, and where dominant groups have a deep and abiding interest in maintaining their epistemic home turf advantage’.⁴ Dominant groups use silencing practices to defend their epistemic home terrain. Silencing does epistemic violence to marginalized epistemic communities not only by undermining speakers’ epistemic credibility, but also by causing them to doubt their ability to make judgements about their moral worth.⁵ Effective silencing practices make it difficult for marginalized knowers to hold their epistemic ground.

The epistemic injustice scholarship identifies a variety of silencing practices. Knowers can be silenced *pre-emptively*, when they are excluded in advance from participating in a testimonial exchange. Miranda Fricker describes this as ‘a tendency for some groups simply not to be asked for information in the first place’.⁶ Consider how women have been accidentally-on-purpose excluded from U.S. government committees on reproductive healthcare policy. Silencing practices also treat knowers as *epistemic objects*, or as *truncated subjects*.⁷ Here, knowers are treated as (re)sources, from whom so-called ‘legitimate inquirers’ glean information to produce proper knowledge. Here, speakers *are* asked for information in the first place, but their knowledge is coopted in support of the asker’s project, undermining their capacity as givers of that knowledge.⁸ Think about how universities coopt the resistant work done by gender studies programs and use it market their commitment to diversity in ways that don’t threaten institutional comfort. Kristie Dotson’s scholarship on epistemic violence identifies two additional silencing practices.⁹ *Testimonial quieting* happens when an audience fails to recognize the speaker as a knower whose testimony is worth hearing. The speaker does not just suffer a credibility deficit because that would

⁴ Bailey, ‘The Uneven Knowing Field: An Engagement with Dotson’s Third-Order Epistemic Oppression’, 63.

⁵ Dotson distinguishes between episodic, non-repetitive *instances of silencing* and deeper systemic and socially functional *practices of silencing* that concern ‘a repetitive *reliable* occurrence of an audience failing to meet the dependencies of a speaker that finds its origins in a more pervasive ignorance’. I focus on Dotson’s repetitive reliable occurrences. See ‘Tracking Epistemic Violence, Tracking Practices of Silencing’, *Hypatia* 26:2 (2011), 236-257.

⁶ Miranda Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice: Power and the Ethics of Knowing* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 130.

⁷ ‘Epistemic objectification’ is Fricker’s term. See, *Epistemic Injustice: Power and the Ethics of Knowing*, 133. The term ‘truncated subjects’ comes from Gaile Pohlhaus, Jr., ‘Discerning the Primary Epistemic Harm in Cases of Testimonial Injustice’, *Social Epistemology* 28:2 (2013), 99-114. Online: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/02691728.2013.782581>

⁸ Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice: Power and the Ethics of Knowing*, 133.

⁹ Dotson, ‘Tracking Epistemic Violence, Tracking Practices of Silencing’, 242-245.

presuppose actually her ability to make a credibility judgment. The speaker's credibility deficit is so severe, that her words are not heard at all. It's as if she never spoke. Consider the court scene in *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Tom Robinson doesn't simply suffer a credibility deficit because he's a Black man. His testimony is 'worth nothing to the jury. As if he did not testify at all'.¹⁰ Finally, *testimonial smothering* is a coerced self-silencing that happens when 'the speaker perceives her immediate audience as *unwilling or unable to gain the appropriate uptake of proffered testimony*.' The speaker's knowledge from previous conversations teaches her to shape or truncate her testimony to 'insure that [it] contains only content for which [her] audience demonstrates testimonial competence'.¹¹ People of color, for example, tactically limit the conversations they are willing to have with white people about race, knowing that white audiences typically lack the epistemic competence to judge those experiences accurately.

So, where is the anger in social practices of silencing? It's *everywhere*. Silence is a condition of oppression, and part of resisting oppression is finding a voice that effectively pushes back against the weight of imposed silences. Silence is saturated with anger because injustice is painful. Anger is an audible expression of resistance to the sufferings of injustice. Our anger pushes back against the complex silences that injustice repeatedly manufactures. When Audre Lorde says: 'My response to racism is anger,' she means that her anger is a justified response to the social and cultural habits, ideologies, institutions, and laws, that dehumanize, erase, and do violence to her.¹² Anger is a justified response to all subordination injuries, even epistemic ones. When a speaker's testimony is smothered, silenced, or rendered inaudible, her anger is smothered, silenced, or rendered inaudible. Silencing anger exacerbates the harms of epistemic injustices because silencing neutralizes or renders invisible the knowledge speakers have of the injury their anger communicates. To be angry is to make a claim on respect.¹³ Silencing is disrespectful precisely because it communicates to the speaker that her testimony is not worth hearing, that she is incapable of making accurate judgements about how she has been wronged, or that the emotional injuries she sustains during a testimonial exchange are unworthy of consideration. The audience's failure to give the speaker's testimony and anger uptake illustrates a failure to respect the speaker as a credible knower; and, like all discredited knowers, she is denied the right to social participation.¹⁴

3. Tone Management as Angry Knowledge Management

My task so far has been to make visible the resistant anger that saturates social practices of silencing. The fact that silencing practices produce angry experiences should now be evident. This section suggests that resistant angry experiences have epistemic content and that one aim of silencing is to manage resistant anger's epistemic content. To illustrate this, I examine—*tone policing* and *tone vigilance*—two anger-silencing practices aimed at directly managing subordinate groups' angry knowledge. My discussion highlights the epistemic and psychological harms that

¹⁰ Rachel McKinnon 'Epistemic Injustice', *Philosophy Compass* 11/8 (2016), 240.

¹¹ Dotson, 'Tracking Epistemic Violence, Tracking Practices of Silencing', 244.

¹² Audre Lorde, 'On the Uses of Anger: Women Responding to Racism', *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches by Audre Lorde* (Trumansburg, New York: The Crossing Press, 1984), 124.

¹³ Marilyn Frye, 'On Anger' *The Politics of Reality: Essays in Feminist Theory* (Trumansburg, New York: The Crossing Press, 1983).

¹⁴ Peter Lyman, 'The Politics of Anger: On Silence, Resentment, and Political Speech' *Socialist Review* 11:3 (1984), 71-2.

tone-managing practices produce when subordinate groups are caught in *anger-silencing spirals*.

Tone policing has a prominent epistemic function. The clearest example comes from Audre Lorde's account of a moment during an academic conference when she spoke out of direct and particular anger to a white woman who replied, 'Tell me how you feel but don't say it too harshly or I cannot hear you'. Lorde comments, 'But is it my manner that keeps you from hearing, or the threat of a message that [your] life may change'?¹⁵ Anger is a response to injury; but, for subordinated knowers, it is treated as something to be managed. In general tone management weakens epistemic credibility by targeting, isolating, and attempting to manage the affective content (the speaker's *manner* of speaking) and the epistemic content (the *message*) in testimony. At its core is the expectation that subordinated knowers, if they want to be heard, must calibrate the timber of their message, to fall within the audience's comfort zone. The connections between anger and tone management are so predictable that I have come to understand them as anger/knowledge management tactics. In fact, anger's epistemic strength can be measured in direct proportion to the amount of energy used to contain it.¹⁶ But, anger-silencing practices are not just about quieting uncomfortable tones as a parent hushes a child at a movie. There is power in the hush. The hush reasserts dominance: it restores the audience's own epistemic and psychological comfort. There at least two patterns of managing this angry knowledge.

In cases of *direct angry knowledge management*, tone policing may trigger an exhausting and familiar anger-silencing spiral.¹⁷ Lorde's anger at racial injustices prompts the white woman to make a request for psychological and epistemic comfort. Angry demands for justice are prone to escalation. Suppose that following this exchange that, sensing that she's not been heard, Lorde reasserts her message in a hotter tone. The white woman may understand the amplified tone as further evidence against Lorde's epistemic credibility and more firmly ask Lorde to soften her voice. These exchanges are *anger-silencing spirals*: closed hermeneutical systems in which the speaker suffers a double epistemic injury—neither her testimony nor her anger get uptake, and she is left with a dense, hot, swelling rage in her chest.

Lorde's story illustrates a form of tone policing that focuses *directly* on the audible anger in a speaker's voice, but anger need not be heard to be managed. There is a second, more insidious, form of tone management that happens when an audience *attributes* anger to a speaker's testimony (independently of her tone) simply because the speaker belongs to a group that is culturally characterized as angry. Roxane Gay's description of how race complicates anger gets at the heart of *attributive anger*. She writes,

I AM an opinionated woman so I am often accused of being angry. This accusation is made because a woman, a black woman who is angry, is making trouble. She is daring to be dissatisfied with the *status quo*. She is daring to be heard. When women are angry, we are wanting too much or complaining or wasting time or focusing on the wrong things or we

¹⁵ Lorde, 'On the Uses of Anger: Women Responding to Racism', 125.

¹⁶ Brittney Cooper, *Eloquent Rage: A Black Feminist Discovers Her Superpower*. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2018), 167.

¹⁷ This is McKinnon's 'epistemic injustice circle of hell.' See, 'Allies Behaving Badly: Gaslighting as Epistemic Injustice', *The Routledge Handbook to Epistemic Injustice*, eds. Ian James Kidd, José Medina, and Gaile Pohlhaus, Jr. (New York: Routledge, 2017), 169, and McKinnon's 'Epistemic Injustice', 240. See also, Sara Ahmed, *Living a Feminist Life* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2017), 38.

are petty or shrill or strident or unbalanced or crazy or overly emotional. Race complicates anger. Black women are often characterized as angry simply for existing, as if anger is woven into our breath and our skin.¹⁸

Here, anger is attributed to a speaker even when her tone is well within the listener's comfort zone. Listeners implicitly assign anger to speakers' words based on their social identity. Attributive anger sparks a prescient form of tone policing that I call *tone vigilance*. Tone vigilance prompts an audience either to listen for anger a speaker's testimony, or to fold a perceived or imagined anger into the testimony because they assume that Black women always speak from an angry place. As if, recalling Gay's words, anger were 'woven into [her] breath and skin.' Attributing anger to marginalized knowers pre-silences them. It triggers an insidious anger-silencing spiral, where reasonable judgments and observations are reduced to the angry nature of a particular group. Sara Ahmed explains,

The figure of the angry black woman is also a fantasy figure that produces its own effects. Reasonable thoughtful arguments are dismissed as anger (which of course empties anger of its own reason), which makes you angry, such that your response becomes read as confirmation of evidence that you are not only angry, but also unreasonable!¹⁹

When anger is attributed to a speaker based on group membership, the causal relationship between reasonable claims about injustice and the speaker's anger is reversed. It's not that her anger makes the claim unreasonable, it's that the perceived or imagined unreasonableness of the claim is attributed to an angry essence at the core of one's group identity. Ahmed continues,

[Y]ou might be angry *about* how racism and sexism diminish life choices for women of color. Your anger is a judgement that something is wrong. But in being heard as angry, your speech is read as motivated by anger. Your anger is read as unattributed, as if you are against x because you are angry rather than being angry because you are against x. You become angry at the injustice of being heard as motivated by anger, which makes it harder to separate yourself from the object of anger. You become entangled with what you are angry about because you are angry about how they have entangled you in your anger. In becoming angry about that entanglement, you confirm their commitment to your anger as the truth 'behind' your speech, which is what blocks your anger, stops it getting through.²⁰

Tone-managing practices are epistemically and psychological harmful. Anger-silencing spirals have different consequences for marginalized speakers than they do for dominant hearers. From the perspective of dominators, tone management serves to restore their psychological and epistemic comfort. The white woman's request that Lorde not speak too harshly is a demand to accommodate her unmet psychological need for racial comfort. Tone management is a defense against 'white fragility' – 'a state in which even a minimum amount of racial stress becomes intolerable, triggering a range of defensive moves. These moves include the outward display of emotions such as anger, fear, or guilt, and behaviors such as argumentation, silence, or the desire to flee a stress-inducing situation. These responses, in turn, function to reinstate white racial

¹⁸ Roxane Gay, 'Who Gets to Be Angry?' *The New York Times* (10 June 2016), online.

¹⁹ Sara Ahmed, *The Promise of Happiness* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2010), 68.

²⁰ Ahmed, *The Promise of Happiness*, 68.

equilibrium'.²¹ The white woman is requesting not to have her epistemic confidence – that is the sense she has of herself as a good white woman who is knowledgeable about race matters – called into question. It's easier mark Lorde as an angry Black woman, than it is to mark her own white ignorance. It is easier to shut down the conversation than to linger in the uncomfortable silences these conversations create. When white people chose comfort over listening to folks of colors' testimonies, we deny ourselves the opportunity to know something important about the world – a strain of knowledge that is rarely visible to us from where we sit or stand.

However, from the perspective of those silenced, anger-silencing spirals are epistemically and psychologically damaging. Silenced anger faces what José Medina calls a 'wrongful interpretive obstacle'.²² When anger is misinterpreted it is emptied of knowledge. Instead of being taken as evidence of lived injury, trauma, or harm, the speaker's anger is used to confirm a character flaw or personality disorder. Women's anger is bitchy, crazy, or hysterical rather than civil or righteous. We are too thin skinned. People of color's rage is uncivil(ized), uppity, or aggressive. They have attitude. These tropes pathologize anger, robbing it of its energy, force, and epistemic content. Our anger is weaponized against us. It is isolated from our testimonies, neutralized, and thrown back at us in limp unrecognizable forms.

Tone management tactics also have a damaging *gaslighting* effect, making speakers feel psychologically insecure and epistemically under-confident. Gaslighting, as Rachel McKinnon explains, 'is when a hearer tells a speaker that the speaker's claim isn't that serious or they're overreacting, or they're being too sensitive, or they're not interpreting events properly. This is used to discount the speaker's testimony'.²³ Gaslighting is part and parcel of most anger-silencing spirals. Telling a woman that she is 'overreacting' or 'being too sensitive' is code for you'd better 'dial it back.' It diffuses angry knowledge by quietly planting seeds of doubt that cause speakers to second-guess the legitimacy of her anger. As Saba Fatima explains, when anger is present, the demands for civility are almost always placed on white women and people of color. This social pattern that leads to paranoia. You begin to doubt your own experience and your own ability to judge that experience. You can never be certain if your emotional reactions are on target. You begin to feel depressed, guilty, or ashamed. You wonder if you have read too much into the situation, or if you are making a big deal out of nothing, or if you are too thin skinned.²⁴ Here, angry knowers are not simply mistaken about their emotions. Their very ability to judge whether the injuries that their anger signals are real is called into question. She might say to herself, 'I don't know why I'm so angry!' Gaslighting works against the gaslighted because gaslighters are fragile beings who rabidly defend their epistemic home turf. They cannot tolerate interpretations of events that challenge their worldview. So, if their worldview reads women's anger as an irrational, or an oversensitive response to trivial matters, then all explanations that point to anger as evidence of unjust harm must be extinguished. The disorienting nature of gaslighting neutralizes the

²¹ Robin DiAngelo, 'White Fragility', *International Journal of Critical Pedagogy* 3:3 (2011), 54.

²² José Medina, *The Epistemology of Resistance: Gender and Racial Oppressions, Epistemic Injustice, and Resistant Imaginations* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 91.

²³ McKinnon, 'Allies Behaving Badly: Gaslighting as Epistemic Injustice', 167.

²⁴ Saba Fatima, 'Being Brown and Epistemic Insecurity', Hypatia Conference, Villanova University, 29 May 2015. Also, 'On the Edge of Knowing: Microaggression and Epistemic Uncertainty as a Woman of Color', *Surviving Sexism in Academia: Feminist Strategies for Leadership*, eds. Kirsti Cole and Holly Hassel (New York: Routledge, 2017), 147-154.

knowledge in that anger trapping angry knowers in a hermeneutically closed system where epistemic traction is rarely possible.

But, the effects tone management has on resistant anger concerns me for another reason. Tone management may prompt speakers to trade our anger for the chance to either be heard or to restore our epistemic confidence. Hoping to be heard we may consciously soften our voices or swallow our anger half way. Like testimonial smothering, what I call *affective smothering*, is a form of self-tone-policing that happens when the speaker recognizes that her audience lacks either the empathy or the affective competence to make sense of her anger as *she* experiences it.²⁵ Thinking ‘*they can’t understand how this anger feels....*’ she swallows her anger half way and repeats herself in a ‘more appropriate tone.’ I know this feeling intimately. There are times when my own resistant anger has injured my epistemic credibility. In a panic, I circled back to restore my audience’s comfort. I softened my anger. Sometimes I apologized and repeated my testimony in honey-toned restatements. But, these retreats come at a cost. The terms of exchange require trading the chance to voice injury and to consider the transformative possibilities of my anger, for the outside chance that restoring my audience’s comfort will also restore *my* epistemic credibility. I almost always I lose this wager. And, when I do, I become an accomplice in the dominator’s anger management project. I assume that my audience’s comfort, and not my anger, will restore my epistemic confidence. I convince myself that this is the only way to get epistemic traction. But, I lose ground and my anger is carried forward into the next conversation where there are more wagers to lose. I have, in Martia Golden’s words, paralyzed my anger and ‘brilliantly shaped it into the soft armor of survival’.²⁶

My task in this section has been to make visible the resistant anger that saturates the social practices of silencing. I have argued that *tone policing* and *tone vigilance* are forms of angry knowledge management that injure knowers. Speakers suffer a double epistemic injury – neither their testimony nor their anger get uptake. The next section focuses more intimately on the texture and distinct epistemic features of this resistant anger and sets the stage for my final discussion of anger’s transformative power.

The Texture and Affective Ancestry of Knowing Resistant Anger

The silences that tone management produces are never empty, still, or mute. Angry tones are not affective embellishments that run alongside knowledge; they are woven tightly into it. Silence is not the voice of submission. Silencing pushes down, but resistant anger pushes back against the normalizing abuse of silencing practices. Resistant anger then, is not a raw unfocused energy. It is a *knowing resistant anger*. ‘Knowing’ because, in Lorde’s words, it ‘is loaded with energy and information’ and ‘resistant’ because its vibrancy endures repeated silencing.²⁷ This anger not an automatic response to silencing, it must be cultivated in the same ways that those working for social justice must cultivate a practical knowledge of how systemic barriers shape their experiences. We must understand the structural origins of our anger. Without an understanding of

²⁵ Fatima treats this as testimonial smothering in ‘On the Edge of Knowing: Microaggression and Epistemic Uncertainty as a Woman of Color’.

²⁶ Marita Golden, *Migrations of the Heart* (New York: Anchor Books, 1983), 21. Cited in Patricia Hill Collins *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment* (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1991), 97.

²⁷ Lorde, ‘On the Uses of Anger’, 127.

how oppressed group's anger is *systemically* silenced, resistant anger feels muddy-headed. So, it's not that some angers have knowledge and others are empty of it, only that anger's knowledge may not yet be intelligible to the subject because anger's resistant possibilities are not yet apparent.

I want to argue that knowing resistant anger is a source of epistemic traction. This requires that I reject the closed hermeneutical framework of the anger-silencing spiral, which is inattentive to the plurality of angry experiences. María Lugones's pluralist account of anger offers a useful vocabulary for making visible the anger that saturates the silences that epistemic injustice repeatedly manufactures. Before making this case, I need to give readers unfamiliar with Lugones's work the basic gist of her pluralist view of the self and explain how this view shapes her account of angry selves.

In "Playfulness, 'World' Traveling, and Loving Perception", Lugones develops a pluralistic feminism, 'one that affirms the plurality in each of us and among us as richness and as central to feminist ontology and epistemology'.²⁸ Her pluralist view of the self is revealed through the practice of playful, loving, 'world' travel. The basic idea here is that outsiders to dominant cultures have acquired a flexibility in moving from mainstream constructions of life, where they are constructed as outsiders, to constructions of life where they more or less at home. For example, people of color must learn to navigate safely white 'worlds' where they feel ill-at-ease and are constructed as outsiders. So, their senses of self are plural because they shift across 'worlds.' Lugones uses the term 'world' in a way that is purposely ambiguous and unfixed. 'Worlds' are purposely incomplete. Worlds are not utopias. They are filled with flesh and blood people. Worlds need not be constructions of a whole society, they may be niches (e.g. a gay bar, a barrio, or a college campus). She is interested in how the shift from one 'world' (i.e. a barrio) to another (i.e. a predominantly white campus) reveals the plurality of self. In some 'worlds' our sense of self is intelligible, in other 'worlds' it is distorted. In the barrio, a Chicana might be at ease, outgoing, funny, or generous. On campus she might be shy, reserved, and cautious. Lugones explains, 'those of us who are 'world'-travelers have the distinct experience of being different in differ 'worlds' and of having the capacity to remember other 'worlds' and ourselves in them'.²⁹ She calls this shift from being one self in one world to being another in another 'world' travel.

Lugones's account of anger reflects her pluralism. If social selves are plural, then angry selves are plural. Our anger is not always intelligible across 'worlds.' In some 'worlds' knowing resistant anger is a clear righteous anger against injustice. In other 'worlds' anger is interpreted as hostile, threatening, or crazy. 'Worlds' have distinct epistemic terrains. So, angry experiences are 'world'-dependent in the sense that 'worlds' shape the *affective textures* of angry experiences. This means that knowing resistant anger has particular textures and features, that it will only be intelligible in particular resistant 'worlds' where its use and value are clear. I'm particularly interested cultivating an understanding of how different angers *feel* so I can quickly identify the particular angry experiences that offer resources for resisting epistemic injustice. To do this, I need to spell out the specific texture of knowing resistant anger.

²⁸ Lugones, "Playfulness, 'World' Traveling, and Loving Perception", *Pilgrimages/Peregrinajes: Theorizing Coalition against Multiple Oppressions* (Lanham, Maryland: Roman and Littlefield Publishers, 2007), 85.

²⁹ Lugones, "Playfulness, 'World' Traveling, and Loving Perception", 86.

In ‘Hard-to-Handle Anger’, Lugones claims that she can ‘make more sense of anger if [she] captures it in its specificity’.³⁰ Her term, ‘hard-to-handle anger’ is purposely ambiguous: it contains the plurality of ways angry experiences are ‘hard’. If selves are plural, then marginalized knowers are at once oppressed ⇔ resisting. As Lugones remarks, ‘one eye sees that oppressed reality, the other sees the resistant one.’³¹ Plurality saturates the hardness of oppressed/silenced ⇔ resisting/angry subjects’ responses to injustice. These are angry pluralist selves. In one sense, hard-to-handle anger has a *hard/heavy* texture that is burdensome, exhausting, laborious, strenuous, and fatiguing.³² It has a heaviness born of frustration with the exhausting process of directing our anger at dominators in dominant worlds of sense where our anger gets no uptake. For example, when women experience a hard/heavy anger in response to campus sexual violence, the heaviness comes from trying to be heard in worlds of sense shaped by campus rape culture – ‘worlds’ that construct our anger as unintelligible on the grounds that *women’s* anger about sexual violence. In these ‘worlds’ our resistant anger pushes back: it ‘has communicative *intent* but it does not always succeed in getting uptake from the oppressor in the official world of sense’.³³ Women’s anger about sexual violence can only be hysteria or a delayed reaction to having sex she now regrets. This is, for Lugones, a self-controlled anger ‘attentive to the official interpretation of her movements, voice, message, asking for respectability, judging those who have wronged her’.³⁴

But, there is a plurality in these angry experiences. They are at once shaped by the one eye that understands oppressed reality and the other eye that pushes back against the oppression from which angry knowers must separate. Hard-to-handle anger also has a *hard/rebellious* texture that presupposes or establishes the need to speak ‘from within separate [non-dominant] worlds of sense. Separate, that is, from worlds of sense that deny intelligibility to the anger’.³⁵ This anger is hard in the sense that it is messy, disorderly, complex, and difficult to manage. It resists being well-ordered, controlled, disciplined, and tidy. Consider how spaces that affirm women’s testimony around sexual violence create resistant ‘worlds’ where our anger is validated. Women experience a hard/rebellious anger about sexual violence when we seek out or create ‘worlds’ where our angry experiences are intelligible. I have in mind ‘worlds’ such as sexual assault survivors’ support groups or social media spaces like the #MeToo movement where our safe sound collective anger gets uptake and where rape myths are dim artifacts of ‘worlds’ where our voices have been silenced.

Following Lugones, I ask that readers hold both anger’s hard and rebellious textures in mind. Angry selves have the capacity to remember those ‘worlds’ where our anger is intelligible and those ‘worlds’ where it is not. And, as I will argue in the next section, resisting silencing practices requires that, when are in dominant ‘worlds’, that we never forget those ‘worlds’ where our anger at injustice makes perfect sense. So, we must consider questions related to angry selves ‘worlds’ they occupy. We must ask, which self is angry? Is the angry self the subordinate self? Or, the

³⁰ Lugones ‘Hard-to-Handle Anger’ *Pilgrimages/Peregrinajes: Theorizing Coalition against Multiple Oppressions* (Lanham, Maryland: Roman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2007), 103.

³¹ Lugones, ‘Playfulness, ‘World’ Traveling, and Loving Perception’, 78.

³² To reduce both the conceptual clutter for those unfamiliar with Lugones’s pluralism, and to focus on the textures of anger. I’ve substituted *hard/heavy* anger for first-order anger and *hard/rebellious* anger for second-order anger. First-order anger sees the oppressed reality and second-order anger resists.

³³ Lugones ‘Hard-to-Handle Anger’, 107.

³⁴ Lugones, ‘Hard-to-Handle Anger’, 104.

³⁵ Lugones, ‘Hard-to-Handle Anger’, 104-5.

resisting self? Is the subordinate self's anger intelligible in dominant worlds of sense by dominators? Or, is it the subordinate angry self-pushing back against dominant worlds of sense in an attempt to be heard? Or, is it the fully resistant angry self, whose anger is fully intelligible in non-dominant worlds of sense? In which 'worlds' is her anger epistemically productive? In which 'worlds' is it neutralized?

My account of knowing resistant anger mirrors Lugones's pluralist view of anger. Knowing resistant anger is a *hard/heavy/rebellious anger* attentive to the epistemic terrains where it is and is not intelligible. It recognizes the hostile 'worlds' that make it heavy, but retains them memory of 'worlds' where its rebelliousness is intelligible. It expands on Lugones's pluralist account by highlighting the epistemic dimensions of anger, acknowledging that anger's affective ancestry, and attending to angers *felt* experiences. So, I will describe this expanded notion of plural angry selves as parts of oppressed/silenced ↔ resisting/angry communities.

Our angers never fully our own. They are partially formed by the 'world'-dependent *affective ancestries* of marginalized social groups. The anger of the ages is always with us. I believe that some angers are inherited along with the historical traumas of colonized and oppressed peoples and the 'worlds' that gave rise to that ancestral anger. As Lorde observes, 'Every Black woman in America lives her life somewhere along a wide curve of ancient and unexpressed angers'.³⁶ Members of oppressed/silenced ↔ resisting/angry communities have collective memories of their suffering, and that historical trauma and pain shapes the contours of their collective anger. U.S. Black anger's coherent genealogy begins with the trafficking African bodies and continues through colonizers use of enslaved labor, the convict-leasing system, Jim Crow, lynching, the rape of Black women and girls, police violence, incarceration, and the school-to-prison pipeline. I can't help but believe that the memories of past injustices are alive in these communities today, because these injustices continue under different names. Ta-Nehisi Coates's memoir offers a glimpse of Black ancestral anger. He describes the moment when a white woman came up behind him in a crowded movie theater and yelled 'Come on!' as she pushed his son out of her way. He writes, 'I turned and spoke to this woman and my words were hot with all of the moment and all of my history'.³⁷ Anger's abiding historical nature suggests that the differences between and among our lived identities are as affective as they are social and cultural, and that 'various historically coherent groups 'feel differently' and navigate the material world on a different emotional register'.³⁸

However, hard-to-handle anger's affective ancestry does not mean that its angry energy is oriented exclusively toward the past. Ancestral anger resonates in both backward- and forward-looking ways. Sometimes anger requires that we dwell on the past. Sometimes our anger reorients itself toward the creation and maintenance of new 'worlds'. So, one texture of anger *feels* the oppressed reality and history, and the other *feels* the resistant reality and possible futures. The feminist literature on anger is filled with references to the visionary and transformative dimensions of anger. Lorde's visionary anger is marked by its ability to move people to act in the service of their

³⁶ Lorde, 'Eye to Eye: Black Women, Hatred, and Anger,' *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches by Audre Lorde* (Trumansburg, New York: The Crossing Press, 1984), 145.

³⁷ Ta-Nehisi Coates, *Between the World and Me* (New York: Random House, 2015), 94.

³⁸ José Estaban Muñoz 'Feeling Brown: Ethnicity and Affect in Ricardo Bracho's *The Sweetest Hangover* (and other STDs)' *Theatre Journal* 52 (2000), 70.

collective vision.³⁹ Sara Ahmed acknowledges anger's bi-directional perspective when she remarks that 'anger is not simply defined in relationship to a past, but as opening up the future. In other words, being against something does not end with 'that which one is against'. Anger does not necessarily become 'stuck' on its object, although that object may remain sticky and compelling. Being against something is also being for something, something that has yet to be articulated or is not yet'.⁴⁰ Lugones describes anger's transformative power as 'cognitively rich, cut from the same tonality and cloth as metamorphosis.' It's an anger 'driven by the weight of resistance and fully inspiring'.⁴¹ So, these hard/heavy/rebellious angers flicker back and forth. They hold the felt memories of communities of angry selves and their histories along with the transformative visions of future angry resistant communities.

Finally, knowing resistant angry experiences just feel differently. They do *not* feel like the angry experiences you have when you are so angry that you *can't* think straight; that is, when your anger moves in unfocused, wasteful, useless, and destructive ways. Unfocused anger moves in ways that diminish its energy, like water moving through the 'shower' or 'mist' settings of a garden hose nozzle. Knowing resistant anger is 'a lucid, clearly focused, and orchestrated anger that is articulated with precision'.⁴² It moves with the force and energy of water that flows through 'jet stream' setting of that garden hose. You are so angry that you *can* see straight. As Lorde explains, 'None of its energy is wasted, for it knows its object and all of its energy is focused on that object in hopes that this anger will be heard and things will change'.⁴³ It is a 'safe and sound anger', a clear-headed anger with the power to destroy and construct, and to inspire courageous action.⁴⁴ Knowing resistant anger is dangerous not because it muddies reason, but because it pushes back against the forces that repeatedly try to rob it of its energy, clarity, and knowledge.

Readers should now have a sense knowing resistant anger's plurality, texture, ancestry, and feel. Attention to felt experiences is important. I find it easier to name my anger by attending to how it feels, than thinking about how it fits into a pre-determined taxonomy. I start from the body and work out. This requires attending to which self is angry, in which 'world', the anger's felt texture and its ancestry. My final section explains the ways that knowing resistant anger offers oppressed/silenced ⇔ resisting/angry groups a resource for resisting epistemic injustice.

4. Knowing Resistant Anger as a Resource against Epistemic Injustice

Feminists have long acknowledged the vital role emotions play in knowledge construction. As Jen McWeeny observes, feminist analyses are grounded in 'the radical idea that *angry experience is a kind of knowing experience*'.⁴⁵ This is not news. Resistant epistemic communities have long recognized the transformative energy of anger that the literature on epistemic injustice curiously

³⁹ Lorde, 'The Uses of Anger', 127.

⁴⁰ Ahmed, *The Promise of Happiness*, 175.

⁴¹ Lugones, 'Hard-to-Handle Anger', 103 and 112.

⁴² Lorde, 'The Uses of Anger', 131.

⁴³ Lorde, 'The Uses of Anger', 129.

⁴⁴ Frye, 'On Anger', 85.

⁴⁵ Jen McWeeny, 'Liberating Anger, Embodying Knowledge: A Comparative Study of María Lugones and Zen Master Hakuin' *Hypatia* 25:2 (Spring 2010), 295.

overlooks.⁴⁶ Despite the epistemic wear and tear that hermeneutically closed systems place on disenfranchised knowers, anger-silencing spirals are epistemically rich spaces. The strength of Lugones's pluralist is that it points at once to the ways hard/heavy anger is neutralized and to the ways hard/rebellious anger is a resource pushing back against dominant 'worlds' of sense. So, where is the knowing resistant anger in epistemic injustice? It's everywhere, but it often escapes our notice because non-pluralist views of anger train knowers to focus exclusively on how anger gets silenced, and not on how anger pushes back. If we shift our attention to the 'world'-breaking hard/rebellious angry experiences (while also keeping hard/heavy anger in mind) we can better understand knowing resistant anger as a transformative creative epistemic resource.

Anger-silencing spirals are epistemically rich spaces. They are as paralyzing as they are transformative. Paralyzing because our anger fails to get uptake, and transformative because this failure obliges us to sit with our anger and in Lorde's words, 'listen to its rhythms'.⁴⁷ Sitting mindfully with our anger is transformative because it grounds us, reorients us, prompts us to move, and to seek out alternative epistemic terrains where our anger is intelligible. It brings us 'back to our bodies, to the gut-level, signaling that we are in a situation that is unjust, damaging, cruel, or dangerous'.⁴⁸ Lorde's image of anger's rhythm highlights both the meter of our angry tones and the intelligibility of the unjust patterns that repeatedly evoke our anger— the silences that epistemic injustices repeatedly manufacture. Rhythms are patterns. Patterns reveal structures. When we sit with anger's rhythms we are made aware of the epistemically damaging effects practices of silencing have on us. In a recent interview with Access Hollywood, Uma Thurman was asked to comment on the prevalence of the abuse of power and sexual violence in the Hollywood film industry. Speaking slowly and deliberately, through gritted teeth, she responded, 'I don't have a tidy soundbite for you, because I've learned – I'm not a child – and I have learned that when I've spoken in anger I usually regret the way I express myself. So, I've been waiting to feel less angry. And when I'm ready, I'll say what I have to say'.⁴⁹ She sat with these rhythms and four months later spoke clearly and directly to the patterns of abuse she endured on and off the Hollywood set.

Here's the general idea. When we shift our attention from the hard/heavy texture of knowing resistant anger toward the hard/resistant texture of our anger its epistemic resources become visible. Knowing resistant anger is transformative because it reorients us. This shift restores our courage and confidence: It prompts us to seek out new epistemic terrains where our anger is alive and intelligible. This intelligibility comes from the epistemic confidence of collectives of oppressed/silenced ⇔ resisting/angry selves; and, is an essential ingredient in creation and sustenance of these resistant communities. This last point requires some unpacking.

For starters, knowing resistant anger reorients knowers by alerting us to the fact that the dominator's interpretations of our anger are not the only means of making sense of that anger. The

⁴⁶ Consider how Fricker drains anger from her paradigm example of testimonial injustice. She selects the anger-free hotel room conversation between Marge and Herbert in *The Talented Mr. Ripley* rather than the water taxi conversation where Marge's clearly-focused anger is resistant and alive. Anger is also drained from the courtroom testimonial exchanges in her *To Kill a Mockingbird* examples, even though it's clear that Tom Robinson, a Black man, must swallow his anger to be heard, and that Mayella, a young white woman, uses anger to bolster her false rape charge against Tom.

⁴⁷ Lorde, 'Uses of Anger', 130.

⁴⁸ Alison Jaggar, 'Love and Knowledge: Emotion in Feminist Epistemology', *Inquiry* 32:2 (1989), 167.

⁴⁹ Lindy West, 'Brave Enough to be Angry', *New York Times*, 8 November, 2017.

non-pluralist interpretation of women's anger as 'bitchy' or 'uppity,' is simply a privilege-protecting bad epistemic habit. Becoming mindful of anger-silencing patterns creates a space in which to reorient our angry energy toward creating and sustaining 'worlds' where that anger is intelligible. In Medina's words, it offers us 'a lucidity, to see things a fresh and redirect our perceptual habits, to find a way out of or an alternative to an epistemic blind alley'.⁵⁰ Reorienting angry knowledge requires resisting the socialized urges to make our anger heard in hermeneutically closed systems and to resist epistemic bad habit like falling back into making sense of our anger on the dominator's terms. Instead, we must challenge the urge to restore our audience's comfort. Our anger will never be at home in the dominator's anger-silencing spirals. Our anger needs a new home. It must move. But, for anger to move it needs traction, and traction requires that we ground ourselves in a particular kind of angry self— a *knowing resistant angry self*. Returning to Lugones pluralist view of angry selves we can now ask: which self is angry? The subordinate hard/heavy angry self or the resistant hard/rebellious angry self? On whose epistemic terrain is she angry? Where does her anger get traction? Where does it get silenced?

Knowing resistant anger helps us to move because is a useful instrument of cartography.⁵¹ It helps us to 'see' structure because we continually traverse epistemic terrains where our anger may or may not be intelligible. This is why Uma Thurman waits to tell her story. She knows that she needs to be less angry to be heard in the context of a live television interview. Knowing where, when, and with whom our anger gets traction offers us spatial information about the 'worlds' where we are most vulnerable and the 'worlds' where we are most intelligible. I have a particular image for this practice. Think about how dogs come to know the boundaries of the invisible fences that confine them by repeatedly testing the limits of their movements in any direction. A cartography eventually emerges from this exercise that identifies fissures in the fencing. If there are regions of the unlevel knowing field where injustice robs anger of its epistemic friction, then we must reorient ourselves, look for fissures, and move toward rougher terrain. We must gather on new ground where our knowing resistant anger is validated and its energy can be redirected productively toward justice-restoring projects. We must seek out new epistemic home terrains where oppressed/silenced ↔ resisting/angry selves can gather collectively to restore our epistemic confidence. There we can affirm how practices of silencing are harmful, as if to say 'You *should* be angry! I'm angry too. Together we will pool our anger in a place where it gets uptake, and we will hold firm to its intelligibility even when we are sucked back into anger-silencing spirals. We will keep alive the memory of epistemic terrains where our anger is heard, even when we are on the dominator's terrain. Together, we will not be silenced!'

Next, seeking out or creating resistant epistemic 'worlds' where our anger is intelligible fills our bodies with confidence and courage. On hospitable epistemic terrains, knowing resistant anger can be a creative force for change. From the standpoint of epistemic injustice hard/rebellious anger is an epistemic confidence booster in the sense that it can restore a knower's self-respect. As Frye notes, 'In getting angry one claims that one is in certain way and dimensions respectable. One makes a claim upon respect'.⁵² On resistant epistemic home terrains, our anger is heard, it gets traction, and we are made newly aware of our power, agency and self-worth. Anger brings courage.

⁵⁰ Medina, *The Epistemology of Resistance*, 45.

⁵¹Lugones, 'Hard-to-Handle Anger', 107-8. See also Frye, 'On Anger', 94-5.

⁵² Frye, 'On Anger', 90.

When we are angry enough to be brave we take risks. These acts of resistance are also acts of creation. Consider how those of us who work for social justice continue to weather the anger-silencing spirals we find ourselves in during university diversity committees, city council meetings, or community forums on policing. One occasion stands out for me. I was at a semester-long series of meetings where department chairs were asked to respond to the campus climate report. At some point, I became aware that I was repeating myself. I realized that my claim that there are no safe spaces for students of color on campus was unintelligible to the committee. I gave up and sat with my anger. I listened to its rhythms. In that stillness I realized, *Ohhhhhh! It's not that my argument is incoherent. It's not that I'm not being clear. It's not that I've not given enough evidence. Either they cannot hear what I'm saying, or it makes no sense to them, or they just don't want to hear it.* The committee could not make sense diversity initiatives outside of the possible ways they could use them to rebrand the campus our campus as welcoming. No traction was possible in that space. Once I realized this I walked out. I no longer yearned to make myself heard in these spaces or to restore the comfort of my audience. I looked for a new home for my anger. I approached allies after the meeting and asked them, 'Am I right about this? Is this your experience too?' They assured me it was. We shared our angry experiences and from our conversations emerged alternative epistemic communities and projects that focused directly on creating safe spaces where students of color could be heard.

Knowing resistant anger then, not only restores the collective epistemic confidence of angry selves, it is also an essential ingredient in creation and sustenance of resistant epistemic communities. It offers us beneficial epistemic friction because we can collectively direct that anger toward change. Projects in feminist epistemology and epistemologies of ignorance have argued that when marginalized knowers encounter hermeneutical sink holes (i.e. anger-silencing spirals) that we would do well to remember that the unlevel knowing field contains alternative interpretive resources and resistant practices.⁵³ Yet, in academic philosophy, little attention is paid to knowing resistant anger as an alternative resource. This is tragic, because anger is central to the formation and maintenance of resistant communities. Anger has a bonding effect— it provides the affective fuel that bring us together and helps to form cohesive social networks and organized movements. Anger at injustice unites us because, in our moving, we come to realize that we are not alone in our anger. What first feels like an isolated subordinated anger is really part of a larger collective resistant angry experience. There are terrains where our anger feels at home, where it is supported by coalitions of oppressed/silenced ↔resisting/angry selves. Resistant epistemic communities must treat our collective knowing resistant anger (and its affective ancestry) as an epistemic resource because collaboratively it offers us epistemic traction. For this resource to be effective, however, it must be sustainable; that is, our knowing resistant anger must not exhaust itself. It must maintain the single-pointed 'jet stream' focus on the objects of injustice. We need not be angry all the time, but oppressed/silenced ↔resistant/angry communities need to keep our collective anger hot and oriented towards transformative projects. Our anger must remain alive and accessible, even if it only simmers gently below the surface. In Lorde's words, this anger 'expressed and translated into action in the service of our vision and our future is a liberating and

⁵³ For examples see Hortense Spillers, 'Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe: An American Grammar Book' *Diacritics*, 17:2 (Summer, 1987), 64-81. James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990). María Lugones, *Pilgrimages/Peregrinajes*. Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Power*, José Medina, *Epistemologies of Resistance*.

strengthening act of clarification, for it is in the painful process of this translation that we identify who our allies and with whom we have grave differences, and who are our genuine enemies'.⁵⁴

Knowing resistant anger then, counters the effects of tone/anger/knowledge management. The purpose of tone policing is to tame, discipline, and extinguish angry knowledge. The purpose of resistant epistemic and political communities is to affirm, nurture, and cultivate that angry knowledge as a resource. Resistant communities are 'worlds' where we practice inoculating our anger against silencing practices. You can't silence anger in an epistemic ecosystem that is designed to keep knowing resistant anger vibrant and visible. The trick here is to keep the communal memory and feeling of knowing resistant anger fresh within us when we find ourselves trapped in anger-silencing spirals. Resistant communities keep anger hot by maintaining cultures where tone management and other silencing practices are ineffective. In this way, they can collectively take action based on their knowledge of epistemic injustice. It is difficult to silence anger in communities that come together around injustices that are transparent to them. Think about how resistant movements in the United States, such as Black Lives Matter, Standing Rock Sioux water protectors, or national student walk-outs in response to gun violence have made their knowing resistant knowledge of police violence, water rights, and the impact of gun violence available to their communities to the point where that knowledge is so widespread and obvious that it has become woven into the very fabric of their epistemic home terrain. As if to say: We've had enough! We can't be silenced! This stops NOW! Don't you dare tone manage us and spin our stories! There is no doubt that the collective anger of these communities justified and real.

The purpose of this discussion has been to excavate the resistant uses of anger that circulate in anger-silencing spirals and to suggest that Lugones's pluralist account of anger offers a way of making knowing resistant anger visible as an epistemic resource. On a closing note, I want to circle back to the concern I raised in the introduction. I'm worried that accounts of epistemic injustice that fail to recognize anger's plurality and power will continue the work of silencing, dismissing, and erasing angry knowledge as a resource for resisting epistemic injustice. I worry that we have failed to heed Kristie Dotson's cautionary tale that 'when addressing and identifying forms of epistemic oppression one needs to endeavor not to perpetuate epistemic oppression'.⁵⁵ The failure to engage knowing resistant anger is not a simple oversight. As Gaile Pohlhaus's work suggests, ignoring knowing resistant anger's transformative power is itself an act willful hermeneutical ignorance that occurs 'when dominantly situated knowers refuse to acknowledge epistemic tools (e.g. Lorde's transformative anger and Lugones's pluralism) developed from the experienced world of those situated marginally'.⁵⁶ I fear that such oversights leave too many of us to wallow in *epistemic despair*: a condition that happens when epistemic communities swallow their anger, surrender to silence, and lose hope of ever being heard. Epistemic despair drains off knowers' resistant energies and consigns us to a world where epistemic traction is a matter of chance.

⁵⁴ Lorde, 'Uses of Anger', 127.

⁵⁵ Kristie Doston, 'A Cautionary Tale: On Limiting Epistemic Oppression', *Frontiers: A Journal of Women's Studies* 33:1 (2012), 24.

⁵⁶ Pohlhaus, 'Relational Knowing and Epistemic Injustice: Toward a Theory of Willful Hermeneutical Ignorance', 1.