Indignants of the World, Unite?
Mobilizations of Indignation in Alter- and Anti-Globalism

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1. Introduction

In 2011, former Résistance fighter Stéphane Hessel (2011) published a manifesto in which he called on everyone, especially the youth of the world, to be indignant: *Indignez-vous!* In many respects, this can be read as a renewed call along the lines of the Communist Manifesto, which in its final phrase asks the workers of all countries to unite. This time, however, the exhortation is directed, first and foremost, at a feeling, instead of an action. Several movements took up this call, including the Spanish *Indignados,* who identified themselves as "the outraged". This boom of indignation is linked with globalization in multiple ways: Not only is it a global phenomenon which has various origins and circulated along certain lines of global communication. What is more, many of the objects and triggers of indignation are linked with what the respective activists identify as aspects of economic, social and cultural globalization.

The surge of indignation is not limited to those who carry the term in their name, like the *Indignados*. For example, long before Hessel's manifesto, the Mexican Zapatistas, inspirers of the Global Justice Movement, organized an international event called *Festival de la Digna Rabia* (Festival of Dignified Rage). Importantly, it is not limited to progressive movements whose actions are directed against forms of exclusion, neoliberalism or financialization. The expression of indignation is common among

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far right intellectuals and activists as well. The goals of the various groups of activists which recur to indignation are diametrically opposed. These observations immediately lead to the question: How can we interpret and react to the invocation and *re-semanticization* of indignation in the context of globalization?

By analyzing and reflecting on narratives of indignation in anti-globalism and alter-globalism, this chapter aims at contributing to a larger debate, in Political Theory, International Relations and beyond, on the significance of emotions for politics. While the post-war era was characterized by the priority to keep emotions out of politics, especially against the background of totalitarian manipulations of racial hatred and fanatic nationalism (Arendt 1963), there is now a rediscovery of the importance of emotions for politics. Among other aspects, political philosophers have explored the importance of emotions for overcoming the status quo in political movements (Walzer 2002), for the generation of belonging and support for values such as justice and democracy (Nussbaum 2013) and for ethical deliberation itself (Jeffery 2011). Especially in debates about justice, the exclusivity of universal rational criteria has been challenged and the experience of indignation has gained center stage as a sensorium for social suffering, in liberal (Shklar 1990), as well as feminist and decolonial political thought (Campello 2021). Some authors have also begun to discuss the relevance of political emotions in the context of globalization and the various alterglobalisms, as well as anti-globalist mobilizations (Pleyers 2010; Pulcini 2013; Bringel/Pleyers 2017; Unrau 2018; Freistein et al. 2022).

While studies on far-right anti-globalism have so far focused on emotions like fear (Wodak 2015), humiliation (Homolar/Löfflmann 2021), or resentment (Heins/Unrau 2020), the focus on indignation has the potential to highlight convergences, but also crucial differences between right-wing anti-globalism and left-wing alter-globalism. It also shows how the ideological assemblages of a global right is increasingly capitalizing on seemingly emancipatory claims that are either derived from or mimic those made by left wing movements (Abrahamsen et al. 2020; Drolet/Williams 2022). In the terminology of this volume, this

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phenomenon of appropriation could in fact be a form of *re-semanticization*.

The chapter will proceed in four steps: First, I will specify the material of analysis by distinguishing between alter- and anti-globalist movements that share a condemnation of current forms of "globalism" or "globalization". Second, I will briefly elaborate on the conceptual and methodological bases of the subsequent analysis, with a focus on the notion of *indignation* and the relationship between experience, narration and politics. Third, I will give a structured account of the recourse to indignation in both alter- and anti-global movements, identifying some of the multiple origins of the phenomenon and suggesting a distinction between the different invocations of indignation as *motivation, mode* and *goal* of political action. Fourth, based on this structured overview, the normative validity of recurring to the emotion of indignation in the context of globalization will be discussed.

The purpose of this exercise of taking stock, comparing and evaluating is not to subscribe to some emotional version of horseshoe theory, according to which far right and left anti- and alter-global mobilization narratives coincide in their recourse to indignation. On the contrary, what I aim at showing is that the recourse to indignation as a motivation, mode and goal of political action can neither undermine nor guarantee the normative legitimacy of the respective political concerns. What matters is the way in which indignation is experienced, narrated and mobilized. In the conclusion, I will sketch out some preliminary considerations concerning the initial question how to evaluate the role of indignation in alter- and anti-global activism.

2. What's Wrong with the Global? Opposition to Globalization Between Alter- and Anti-Globalism

The body of analyzed material comprises different forms of texts – including philosophical works, song texts, journalistic pieces and various self-representations of movement organizations on homepages etc. Not only do they differ in style and mode of presentation, they also come

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from very different political orientations. What they have in common is that they represent some form of reaction to the processes commonly summarized under the label of globalization – most broadly understood as the "widening, deepening and speeding up of worldwide interconnectedness" (Held/McGrew 2007, 1), especially in their accelerated and intensified form which can be observed after the end of the Cold War and the post-bipolar constellation. These processes include, but are not limited to intensified international trade and financial transactions, increased importance and power of multinational corporations, the imposition of financial policies based on privatization and austerity, facilitated travelling, transplanetary communications, hybridization of ways of life and intensified migration (e.g., Giddens 1994, 4; Appadurai 1996, 17; Beck 1997, 28–29; Scholte 2005, 8). All of these processes lead to permanent crossings of national boundaries and some – especially those which have to do with the economic integration of the world and the imposition of neoliberal economic policies – are perceived to have caused an increase in individual insecurity and a permanent threat of unemployment and loss of status (Bauman 2000, 2001).

The texts analyzed in this chapter take issue with different aspects of these processes and envision alternative futures. They can be divided into two groups: The first group, which has been labeled as "globalization from below" (Brecher et al. 2000), "global justice movement" (della Porta 2007) or "alter-globalization" (Pleyers 2010) generally embraces and celebrates those aspects of globalization which have to do with facilitated travelling, migration and communication but sharply criticizes the boundaries erected against the free movement of persons, the unequal distribution of wealth, the transfer of binding decision-making power to international financial institutions like the IMF and the WTO, as well as the excessive power of multinational corporations. There are significant differences within this group of movements and authors as to the various visions of an alternative form of globalization – ranging from a reform of international institutions to radical transformation starting from below – and also with regard to the proposed repertoires of action. At the same time, however, there is a web of cross-references and common convictions which allow for the identification

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of one movement of movements. Temporarily, it found its common denominator in the motto "Another world is possible" and established its own cycle of protests and meetings, the most important one being the World Social Forum, which first took place in Porto Alegre, Brazil, in 2001. Examples from this group discussed below include texts by the Mexican *Zapatista* movement, which declared "war" on the Mexican government and neoliberal globalization in 1994, as well as movement intellectuals like Pierre Bourdieu, Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri. The intellectual roots of this movement are multiple, ranging from Keynesian economics to different strands of unorthodox Marxism, including dependency theory, Italian Autonomism and Latin American liberation theology (Unrau 2018, 35–37).

The *Indignados* movement in Spain, as well as *Occupy* and others, belong to a different protest cycle, which started after the financial crisis of 2008/09. During this protest circle, "neoliberal globalization" was no longer the most prominent point of reference when naming the relevant grievances. "Neoliberalism", however, survived as a key term and many of the earlier grievances addressed by the *Global Justice Movement* remained relevant. Along these lines, Hessel's *Indignez-vous* urged young people to resist the "oppression by an actual international dictatorship of the financial markets, which threatens peace and democracy" (Hessel 2011).

The group of far-right intellectuals and activists examined here cannot be attributed to an analogous web of social movements. While their basic values and orientations are diametrically opposed to those of the *Global Justice Movement* and its successors, they share a concern with "globalization", or "globalism". Their alternative visions of the future revolve around a re-erection of national and/or ethnic boundaries and a reestablishment of closed communities, even if those are sometimes imagined as part of wider "civilizational" empires. While there are considerable tensions and contradictions between various strands, a loose coalition of far-right self-ascribed anti-globalist thinkers and movements emerges, who converge on their goal of retrieving "innate culture", an emphasis on identity and a rejection of "liberal" international norms (De Orellana/Michelsen 2019; Drolet/Williams 2018; Griffin 2017).

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Examples discussed in the following study include representatives of right-wing extremist movements from the1990s, such as the Italian rock group *Zetazeroalpha*, which is closely associated with the neo-fascist and explicitly anti-globalist squatters' movement *Casa Pound*. A more recent example of an anti-immigrant movement which emerged only around 2015 is the German *Pegida* – "Patriotic Europeans against the Islamization of the Occident." Although less outspokenly anti-systemic than groups like *Casa Pound*, *Pegida* clearly plays with radical modes of the rhetoric of indignation (Heins/Unrau 2020). Besides the protagonists of the intellectual movement referred to as the *New Right*, including Alain de Benoist, more recent far right ideologues have appeared in the context of the rise of populist radical right parties. One example is Marc Jongen, one of the most programmatic thinkers of the German "Alternative for Germany" (AfD) party. His intellectual teacher Peter Sloterdijk will also be taken into account since he constantly straddles the boundaries between the critical intellectual and the anti-immigrant rhetorician. The intellectual roots of this very loose network of thinkers and activists are broad and at times disconnected. For example, while some thinkers play with references to Germanic paganism, or share a Nietzschean anti-Christian attitude, others idealize Christianity as a cultural marker and anti-relativist tradition of thought (Schieder 2020, 221). A wide-spread heritage in far-right anti-globalism is that of the so-called *Conservative Revolution* with Carl Schmitt as its hero (Drolet/Williams 2022, 26).

For reasons of feasibility and linguistic capacities, the origin of the discussed texts is restricted to Western and Southern Europe, Latin America and North America. The time span covered here is largely from the beginning of the 1990s, which marks the end of the bipolar world and thus the starting point of the last, most intensive and most self-reflexive era of globalization, to the present.

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3. Fighting Against Indignity? Indignation as Experience and Narration

In his famous considerations on Political Theory, Isaiah Berlin (1978 [1961], 148) explains its role using the question of obedience: "When we ask, what is perhaps the most fundamental of all political questions, 'Why should anyone obey anyone else?', we ask not 'Why do men obey?'". This latter question, according to him, might be answered by "empirical psychology, anthropology and sociology". By contrast, "[w]hen we ask why a man should obey, we are asking for the explanation of what is normative in such notions as authority, sovereignty, liberty, and the justification of their validity in political arguments" (Berlin 1978, 148). Similarly, this chapter shifts the focus from the question why people are indignant or which actions are prompted by indignation, which have been explored extensively by sociologists of social movements (Goodwin et al. 2001; Jasper 2014), to the normative implications of recourses to indignation in the context of the current world order. However, the aim is not to separate theoretical considerations from the crucial insights provided by sociology, psychology and interdisciplinary emotion research, but to bring them together.

When it comes to tentatively assessing the various recourses to indignation, the conceptual and political history of the emotion has to play a role. In fact, indignation has a long – and political – history, which is worth recapitulating in order to make sense of current uses. In the *Rhetoric*, Aristotle interprets indignation (for which he uses the verb "to nemesan" – "to be indignant") as the mirror image of compassion: While compassion is pain felt for others' undeserved misfortune, indignation refers to undeserved wellbeing (Aristotle 2020, 1386 b 10 ff.). As opposed to envy, which is also triggered by others' well-being (Aristotle 2020, 1386 b 18), indignation is a specific reaction to phenomena such as undeserved wealth or undeserved positions of power (Aristotle 2020, 1387 a9 ff.).

The Italian and Latin words used by Machiavelli ("sdegno": Machiavelli 1996 [1531], 370) and Spinoza ("indignatio": Spinoza 1994 [1677], 61) convey the characteristic of being an offence against somebody's "dignity". This understanding of indignation as a "proof of existence"

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(Bromell 2013) of intrinsic dignity and as a sensorium for its violation was reflected on in the context of experiences of slavery and, later, discrimination of Black Americans. Similarly, theories of citizenship and recognition have drawn on the experience of indignation as an indicator of injustice and exclusion in the political realm (Shklar 1990; Honneth 1992; Brighi 2016). Especially decolonial and feminist approaches have questioned the role of rationality as the exclusive criterion for the assessment of justice claims and foregrounded the implications of personal emotional experience (Lorde 1981; Hoggett and Thompson 2002; Campello 2021).

Before assessing the various recourses to indignation in alter- and anti-global movements, it is necessary to have a closer look at them. Against this background, the special emphasis in the analysis of the material is on its experiential content and how it is narrated. In the large and growing interdisciplinary literature on emotions, there is a certain convergence in understanding emotions as "hybrid" forms of experience which comprise both a physical, bodily, and a cognitive mode of getting in touch with reality (Roth 2003, 296; Jeffery 2011, 147). Importantly, we can never have access to these experiences directly, but only to their symbolic articulation. Also, the experience of reality is always already shaped by the symbols, narratives and discourses which are available at a certain moment in time (also Taylor 1985, 37).

Experiences of indignation and exhortations to be indignant can be expressed directly, as exemplified by Hessel's call *Indignez-Vous*. However, they can also be articulated indirectly via storytelling, e.g. through certain plots and the attribution of roles. Therefore, when taking stock of recourses to indignation in alter- and anti-global movements, the focus lies on the narrative articulations of indignation. Thus, the methodology of narrative analysis, with its emphasis on roles, plots and metaphors, becomes relevant in the context of this analysis. How are the roles of villains, victims and heroes ascribed to the protagonists of the respective stories? Which metaphors are deployed? Is there a special plot structure, such as decline, rise or decline-and-rise which can be discerned? And, importantly, which myths, legends and other elements of a given reper-

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toire of stories are recurred to (Czarniawska 2004; Mayer 2014; Shenhav 2015; Freistein and Gadinger 2019)?

4. Taking Stock: Indignation in Alter-Global and Anti-Global Movements

Since the interest lies on the mobilization of indignation with a view to action against the current form of world order, the analysis will focus on the respective relationship between experience and action: Firstly, recourse to indignation as a *motivation* of political action will be taken into account, i.e., arguments that take the form of "We need to act because we experience indignation". Secondly, the focus will shift to indignation as a *mode* of political action. This regards arguments like "We take action by expressing, articulating and living based on indignation". Thirdly, I will turn to arguments about indignation as a *goal* of political action, i.e. calls to act in order to arouse indignation in others.

Motivation

The first common way of invoking indignation is as a motive for action. Among many others, Pierre Bourdieu articulates this relationship between rage/indignation and political action in the introduction of his collection of political texts entitled *Contre-feux*: "I would not have engaged in taking a public stance if I had not had, each time, the feeling – which might have been illusionary – to be constrained to do so by a kind of legitimate outrage, which was sometimes close to something like a feeling of duty" (Bourdieu 1998, 7).[1] He expresses the meaning of indignation as a motivation for action by recurring to his own personal story, which led him from academia to the position of being a public intellectual. By using the word "constrained", he presents the experience of rage as a force, something that acted against his first impulse, which might have been to stay in the comfort of the "ivory tower". The temporal specification "each

1 All translations from sources that are not originally in English are my own.

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time" makes it clear that it was a repeated experience and not a singular event.

Indignation as a motivation for action can also be found in *Commonwealth*, the third part of Michael Hardt's and Antonio Negri's trilogy on globalization: "In indignation, as Spinoza reminds us, we discover our power to act against oppression and challenge the causes of our collective suffering. In the expression of indignation our very existence rebels" (Hardt and Negri 2009, 236). With their recourse to Spinoza, Hardt and Negri inscribe their own interpretation in a long history of indignation as a topic of political philosophy. The generic "we" they use can refer to the authors themselves, and to all of those who, from their perspective, form the "Multitude" in its struggle against "Empire".

In *Indignez-Vous* by Stéphane Hessel we find a similar celebration of indignation, here in the mode of a direct appeal to the reader: "I wish for you all, each of you, to have your own motive for indignation. It is precious. When something outrages you as I was outraged by Nazism, then people become militant, strong, and engaged" (Hessel 2011). Thus, he presents himself as the hero that he was, fighting the Nazi invasion, but not in order to emphasize the singularity of his act. Instead, he presents himself as an example that is worthy of emulation when the reasons for outrage persist even after the demise of Nazism.

The *Democracia real ya* campaign in Spain, which was in part inspired by Hessel's manifesto and in turn inspired the mobilizations of the *Indignados* movement (Antentas 2015), also identified indignation as that which motivated its members across all ideological divisions:

> Some of us think of themselves as more progressive, others as more conservative. Some are believers, others aren't. Some of us have clearly defined ideologies, others think of themselves as apolitical… But we are all concerned and indignant in view of the political, economic and social panorama that surrounds us. Of the corruption of the politicians, businessmen and bankers…Of the defenselessness of the ordinary citizen (*Democracia real ya* 2011).

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Here, the individual experience of indignation is collectivized and turned into both the motivation of action, and the moment of identification which separates heroes ("ordinary citizens") from villains ("politicians, businessmen and bankers").

While both Hardt/Negri and Hessel interpret indignation as a way of connecting with the inner self and finding motivation and strength for action, theologians close to the Global Justice Movement associate indignation with a spiritual experience of the divine: "[T]he experience of ethical indignation, which leads to social commitment, has been and must be interpreted as a true spiritual experience" (Míguez et al 2009, 5).

Social commitment against the grievances which cause indignation is thereby presented as a commitment born out of divine revelation. Here, we see an interesting parallel with the views expressed by German philosopher Peter Sloterdijk. He presents rage (and indignation, which he does not differentiate clearly) as concomitant with the birth of European culture and a fundamental human capacity: Given that it appears in the first sentence of the *Iliad*, the oldest European work of literature, he calls it "the first word of Europe" (Sloterdijk 2010, 2)[2] and emphasizes that this rage, in Homer's world, is seen as "belonging to the realm of the higher powers" (Sloterdijk 2010, 4) and "granted from above" (Sloterdijk 2010, 5). In Sloterdijk's reconstruction of ancient rage, it is transmitted through participation between the gods and humans. By anchoring his considerations on rage and indignation in ancient Greek literature, Sloterdijk not only nobilitates the emotion in question but also emphasizes his concern with tradition: In fact, early on in his book he speaks about "our cultural tradition" and inserts the question "is this 'our' still valid?", thereby already insinuating that "our tradition" may be threatened and should be retrieved precisely by recurring to the capacity for rage.

In his program, the lynchpin for this retrieval is the notion of *thymos*, which he presents as the Greek term for the passionate part of the soul.

2 Citations from *Rage and Time* are from the English translation Sloterdijk (2010). The German original version was published in 2006. Translations from *Last Exit Indignation* are my own.

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In his 2010 book *Rage and Time*, which was originally published in German in 2006, his overall diagnosis as to the current state of this human capacity was that of a "darkening of the thymotic dimension" caused by a "one-sided eroticization" (Sloterdijk 2010, 17) in modernity. However, in a later essay entitled *Last Exit Indignation*, his interpretation of the current age is less negative. Now he sees some of the "old" capacity of rage and indignation and interprets it as a force which motivates people to act against those tendencies which threaten democracy and citizen participation: "He is back, the citizen who retained his capacity of indignation, since he kept his sense of self-affirmation against all the attempts to reduce him to a container of libido, and who manifests these qualities by bringing his dissidence into the public sphere" (Sloterdijk 2015).

So, while the plot structure in *Rage and Time* was one of decline, *Last Exit Indignation* is characterized by a resurrection plot. By referring to the legend of *Lucretia*, the founding myth of the Roman republic, he also emphasizes that the motivational force of indignation is directly linked to the constitution of the political: After Lucretia was raped by the despotic king Tarquinius, she sacrificed herself instead of succumbing to the king's will to make her his wife. The king's arrogance and violence aroused the people's indignation, which in turn led to the foundation of the Roman republic. Sloterdijk makes it very clear that he sees this connection of indignation and political commitment as a source of hope for the present threats of "postdemocracy": "In moments like the present it does not harm to recall that the original res publica was itself derived from the psychopolitical primary affects pride and indignation" (Sloterdijk 2015).

Sloterdijk's praise of the indignant citizen who is moved to act against post-democratic threats by his rage was also explicitly directed against a critical portrait of the "raging citizen" ("Wutbürger") which was put forward in a widely read editorial by *Spiegel* journalist Dirk Kurbjuweit (Kurbjuweit 2010). Interestingly, the term was also appropriated by the Pegida movement and its supporters: In an article entitled *They question the system. Phenomenology of the new raging citizen* Pegida supporter Michael Paulwitz first lists the various references to the "raging" or "indignant" citizen, including the one to the middle-class

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opponent of infrastructure projects and the left-leaning exhortation to "be indignant" by Stéphane Hessel. He then goes on to argue that the anti-immigrant and anti-elite activists of Pegida are the "*real* raging citizens" in so far as they do not only protest against particular political projects but deny their support to the entire political class and the "media mainstream" and thereby "question the system" (Paulwitz 2015, emphasis added; Heins and Unrau 2020).

Mode

Apart from its motivating role, indignation is also recurred to as a mode of action and as a guiding principle. This is expressed by the Mexican *Zapatistas* in their Sixth Declaration, where they emphasize that instead of imposing certain decisions and coalitions with other social movements, their guideline is the existing indignation of their constituency. Thus "escuchar la indignación" – "listening to indignation" – is their motto (EZLN 2005). A similar use of the term is made by Hardt and Negri when they interpret their own task as

> to investigate the organizational framework of antagonist subjectivities that arise from below, based on the indignation expressed by subjects in the face of the unfreedoms and injustices of power, the severe forms of control and hierarchy, and the cruel forms of exploitation and expropriation in the disordered world of global governance. Indignation, as Spinoza notes, is the ground zero, the basic material from which movements of revolt and rebellion develop (Hardt and Negri 2009, 235).

Thus, they present the experience of indignation as the "basic material" of activism. What then arises as a question for them is in how far singular instances of indignation can be turned into a wider strategy: "Indignation is born always as a singular phenomenon, in response to a specific obstacle or violation. Is it possible, then, for there to be a strategy of indignation? Can indignation lead to a process of political self-determination?" (Hardt and Negri 2009, 236). They answer this

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question by pointing to the long history of spontaneous rebellions out of indignation, which they term *Jacqueries*, alluding to the French peasant rebellions of the fourteenth century. According to Hardt and Negri, in all those instances indignation never merely led to uncontrolled eruptions but targeted those symbols and objects of power which were "adequate" (Hardt and Negri 2009, 237) with regard to the respective grievance: While peasants targeted the riches of the aristocracy, workers rebellions were directed against machines as embodiments of capital and current rebellions (to which they also count the 2005 riots in the Banlieues) target the police, schools and means of transportation as symbols of the current "biopolitical" form of domination (Hardt and Negri 2009, 237). What concerns them is the fact that *Jacqueries* lack organizational structures, the ideation of which they see as part of their own task. Therefore, they conclude: "We remain convinced that the expression of indignation and revolt in jacqueries is essential for a process of transformation but that without organization they cannot achieve it. Jacqueries are not sufficient, in other words, but they are necessary" (Hardt and Negri 2009, 240).

By inscribing their own investigation in the history of *Jacqueries*, they show that there is a certain tradition of rebellions and disobedience born out of indignation. At the same time, they attest to the fact that not all of these rebellions had lasting effects and some lacked a "project", thereby ascribing to themselves the role of developing such a project for the current age of "Empire", in collaboration with the forces they identify as the "Multitude", composed of the global totality of marginalized, precarious, but nevertheless creative and powerful singularities.

If we look at the side of extreme right anti-globalization, we also find forms of sublimations of rage as a mode of action. The envisioned subjects, however, are not a wide and diverse coalition of indignant singularities, but an ethnocratically defined, exclusive collective of nationals. The "rage", in this case, is directed against a hostile world referred to as "the system", which is understood as an arrangement of "alien" dominant forces. Thus, in a song text of the neo-fascist rock band *Zetazeroalfa*, rage – translated into physical violence – is presented as a means of liberation:

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> It is growing and comes from below,
> the metaphysics of the stone;
> And I don't know if I can tell you: Aim high and jump over the ditch;
> It is growing together with rage to destroy the cage;
> And the window is breaking, there is someone who is crying now!"
> (Zetazeroalfa 2010a) .

As is made clear in the last line, the form of action which follows from this rage is blind violence: the breaking of windows, which causes individual – but arbitrary – suffering: "Qualcuno", someone, that is anyone who is not part of the inner circle, is a representative of the "system" (see also the song *Mai come voi/Never like you*, Zetazeroalfa 2010b) and therefore made to cry.

While activists in extremist right-wing groups like *Casa Pound* see themselves as the subjects and the agents of rage – often engaging in and celebrating physical violence – right-wing populist politicians identify as those who translate the "rage" of the people and bring it into the political system. One example is the public performance of Marine Le Pen, leader of the French populist right-wing party *Rassemblement National*. While she does not publicly endorse physical violence, her rhetoric deliberately transcends the boundaries of what is generally deemed adequate for the public debate. When criticized for her choice of words, she said she deliberately chose to challenge the "delicate ears" of those who are not used to such expressions, since she was the "porte-parole de la colère" (cited in Reuters 2017), i.e., "spokesperson of the rage" of the people vis-à-vis the powerful.

The question of indignation as a mode of political action is also discussed by political philosopher Peter Sloterdijk. In a deliberation which is reminiscent of Hardt's and Negri's argument about organizational structures, Peter Sloterdijk turns to the political effectiveness of indignation and rage. With a view to historical episodes of what he calls "the project form of rage" (Sloterdijk 2010, 62), he comes to a different conclusion than the authors of the "Empire" trilogy:

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> Only when discrete energies are invested into superior projects and far-sighted, sufficiently calm, diabolic directors take care of administrating collective rage, can the many and isolated fire places become one single power plant. This plant could provide the energy for co-ordinated actions, up to the level of 'world politics' (Sloterdijk 2010, 63).

Goal of Action

The third type of invocations of indignation by activists of alter- and anti-globalization links it with goals of action: In various ways, activists express their surprise or anger at the fact that not everyone feels indignation in view of the grievances, injustices and sufferings of the present. For example, liberation theologist Jung Mo Sung emphasizes: "The founding experience, called by liberation theology the first moment, is [...] the experience of ethical indignation. Not everybody feels such indignation, no matter how grave the social problems are" (Sung 2005, 4). Implicitly, he calls for action to make other people feel the indignation which is adequate in view of the social problems he mentions. The direction of this action is alluded to in his diagnosis of the reason for this lack of indignation which – in his view – is pathological: According to his analysis, indignation in view of the inhumane treatment of the marginalized of the world is lacking because there is a deliberate effort of ideological construction (namely, neo-liberalism), according to which some sections of the global population are simply excluded from the circle of those who matter. In the name of macro-economic transformation – such as growth and privatization – the suffering of sections of the population is interpreted as a necessary evil which must be accepted in view of a higher overall goal. According to Sung, the success of this ideological endeavor is the result of a lack of indignation (Sung 2005, 5–9).

An alternative diagnosis for the same phenomenon – namely a lack of widespread indignation – is offered by sociologist Pierre Bourdieu. He takes issue with the way news are presented on TV, namely as an endless chain of threatening events without any distinction between problems

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caused by crime, natural catastrophes or unjust political actions (Bourdieu 1998, 83). And he concludes: "So a pessimist philosophy of history creeps in, one that invites to retreat and resignation rather than to revolt and indignation and, far from mobilizing and politicizing, can only contribute to the rise of xenophobic fears" (Bourdieu 1998, 83–84).

Thus, according to Bourdieu, television as a central medium of information for a large section of the population creates a mentality of retreat vis-à-vis a world which is perceived as senseless and threatening, it anaesthetizes people against what should trigger their indignation and their willingness to engage politically. By referring to xenophobic fears, Bourdieu also alludes to an alternative emotion which is triggered in many, one that he understands as equally inadequate as the lack of any emotional reaction caused by a general retreat from the world. So, the stimulation of indignation as an adequate reaction to the present injustices becomes the goal of political action, including the one he himself is engaging in by taking a public stance and analyzing patterns of the media field. Thereby, he also insinuates that the story of decline about an overwhelming amount of bad news leading to "fatalist disengagement" (Bourdieu 1998, 84) could be reversed.

A similar understanding can be found in the manifesto *Indignez-vous!*: What the appeal in the title suggests is that readers and listeners may not be indignant, but that they should be and the author will tell them why, reminding them of his specific legitimacy as a Résistance-fighter: "We, the veterans of the resistance movements and combat forces of Free France, we call on the young generation to live by, to transmit, the legacy of the Resistance and its ideals. We say to them: Take our place, 'Indignez-vous!' [Get angry! or Cry out!]" (Hessel 2011).

Sloterdijk, too, shares the goal of arousing passionate responses to the present, when he calls for an "intelligence which retrieves its thymotic motives" and envisions a "universe of energetic, thymotically irritable actors" (Sloterdijk 2010, 230).

While in *Last Exit Indignation*, the object of indignation is mainly the "neutralization of the citizen" in the sense of his marginalization from the political process, in *Rage and Time*, the calls for a thymotic culture remain rather vague in terms of their political implications. However,

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some remarks already point to a certain direction, such as ominous references to "potential genocides in the countries of the Near and Middle East and elsewhere, countries that are populated by angry young men" (Sloterdijk 2010, 42),[3] and more explicit warnings of an "approaching Muslim youth bulge, the most extensive wave of genocidal excesses of adolescent men in the history of mankind" (Sloterdijk 2010, 223).

When the German government decided not to close its borders to refugees who mainly arrived via the Balkan route in late summer 2015, Sloterdijk made it clear in several interviews that for him, the *thymos* he appealed to should be aroused by this arrival of refugees. For example, he claimed that Europe was rendered more fragile – using the psychotherapeutically connoted term "labil" – by the arrival of large numbers of refugees (Sloterdijk 2016).

This line of argument was taken up by Sloterdijk's disciple Marc Jongen, who abandoned his academic ambitions in order to become the chief rhetorician of the anti-immigrant and populist radical right party AfD. On several occasions, he drew a much clearer line from the celebration of thymotic rage to the "defence" of national identity against immigrants and new-comers. He diagnosed a "thymotic undersupply" (Bender and Bingener 2016) and declared that it was the goal of the AfD to "rise thymotic tension in Germany", in order to make it more "fortified" against more "robust characters", namely Muslim immigrants (Bender and Bingener 2016). This "self-confident voice" was immediately celebrated by right wing extremist intellectual Götz Kubitschek when he turned it into a "guideline for action" in his magazine *Sezession*: "Anything that serves the mobilization and heightening of thymotic tension, the big rage against the anti-German politics needs to be endorsed, bolstered and supported by us" (Kubitschek 2016, 10).

Ultimately, Jongen took the opportunity to present his theses on thymotic tension in person at the Winter Academy of the *Institut für Staat-*

3 The more drastic wording in the German original wording is "overpopulated": "die Neutralisierung der völkermörderischen Potentiale in den von zornigen jungen Männern übervölkerten Staaten des Nahen und Mittleren Orients und anderswo."

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spolitik, the right-wing extremist think-tank co-founded by Kubitschek. In his speech, he called the situation caused by the alleged opening of the borders to refugees in Germany in 2015 a "prototypical cause of indignation". While he expressed his amazement at the fact that wide shares of the population did not feel this indignation, he also articulated a hope that the so-called "migration crisis" would lead to a "thymotic training", i.e., re-awakening of "thymotic tension" (Kanal Schnellroda 2017). Obviously, his own storytelling at this occasion and others can be interpreted as an attempt at reinforcing and accelerating this process.

5. Making Sense: Reflecting on Indignation

As can be seen from this overview, references to indignation as motivation, mode and goal of political action can be found in both alter- and anti-globalist activism and idea production. Therefore, I suggest reflecting on these relationships between experience and action in order to move towards the development of a critical yardstick for the normative mobilization of this political emotion. These preliminary considerations might pave the way for what could be regarded as a critical assessment of indignation in the context of globalization.

Adequacy

If indignation is interpreted as a motivation for political action against the current form of world order, but also when it is set as a goal of action, then a first potential criterion to assess such a motivation is the *adequacy* of indignation. That this question is relevant for some of the protagonists of alter-globalism is attested to by Bourdieu's statement from the introduction of *Contre-feux*: On the one hand, he emphasizes that it was not just any form of rage which motivated his political commitment, but a "legitimate" one. On the other hand, he admits that this feeling might have been illusionary – "peut-être illusoire" – pointing to the dubious and transitory nature of emotions. Bourdieu thus interweaves certainty and doubt in an intricate way (Unrau 2018, 218–19). The use of the term

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"legitimate indignation" is not an isolated phenomenon: Similar expressions can be found in liberation theologian Yung Mo Sung, who speaks about "ethical indignation" (Sung 2005, 4), and in Leonardo Boff, who uses the term "iracundia sagrada" (holy rage, Boff 1993, 169). What these validating adjectives indicate is that these authors are aware that indignation per se does not suffice as the basis for a claim of legitimacy. Instead, it needs to be validated by some other source, notably other forms of experience.

As mentioned before, the question which criteria are apt to determine the adequacy of emotions like indignation was already discussed by Aristotle. While we may not agree with his specific criterion it is worth recalling that for Aristotle, the term indignation was reserved for adequate reactions to (political) injustices, and this adequacy could only be determined by recourse to practical reason. The validation of indignation through criteria which are set by practical reason is in line with philosopher Amartya Sen's view that injustice can be detected emotionally but that this emotional reaction must be subjected to "reasoned scrutiny" (Sen 200, viii, 39 ff.). As Matthias Iser puts it, "as a moral emotional reaction which claims to signal injustice, indignation requires an argumentative examination of its adequacy" (Iser 2008, 8). As potential criteria for such an examination he suggests Habermasian ethics of equal communication or Honneth's theory of recognition.

However, as the recent debate on the relevance of experience in Political Theory reminds us, there is a problematic element to this conviction that experiences of injustice can be easily divided into adequate and inadequate ones. For example, in her influential book *Faces of Injustice*, Judith Shklar calls for the recognition of the *subjective sense of injustice* as a valid element of any theory of justice since a simple comparison of expressions of indignation with the "known legal or ethical rule" (Shklar 1990, 49, 7) is not sufficient. Otherwise, any claim that exceeds these rules could be dismissed as inadequate. As she points out, important political victories, such as the ones won by the Women's and Civil Rights Movement, were only possible because people articulated their experiences of indignation, which, at the time of their struggle, went against the legal and ethical status quo. However, this welcome clarification does

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not amount to an obligation to accept any articulation of indignation as equally valid and politically relevant.

For example, empirical social research has shown that the activists and members of the Pegida movement have a clearly above-average level of formal education and income (Vorländer et al. 2017, 73–74). Of course, this socio-demographical fact alone does not warrant a denial of the adequacy of their indignation. However, it is an interesting entry point for a consideration of psychological mechanisms which account for particular mobilizations of indignation. In this context, the most relevant competitor to claims to indignation is probably not envy per se, as discussed by Aristotle, but a more complicated emotional disposition, namely *shame*.

With reference to the conceptual work by Turner (2007) and Scheff (1994), Salmala and Scheve argue that in case of right-wing populisms, what is expressed as indignation or anger is often a repressed form of (actual or anticipated) shame caused by a perceived threat to personal identity (Salmela and von Scheve 2017, 582). Shame – the loss of self-esteem which follows from the failure to fulfill internalized expectations (Salmela and von Scheve 2017, 582) – is a strong and negative emotion, which leads to its repression and, ultimately, its projection on minorities or members of cultural elites, who are constructed as "enemies of the precarious self" (Salmela and von Scheve 2017, 573).

While this argument contains an element of psychological speculation, a comparison between several European states in the aftermath of the 2008 financial crisis supports this line of thought. It suggests that left-wing populism has been more successful than right-wing populism in countries most affected by the 2008 financial crisis. If large portions of the population were affected by austerity cuts this led to a common awareness that individuals are not responsible for the loss of their jobs, salaries or pensions, which in turn makes it easier for them to self-identify as humiliated and blame unjust structures for their grievances. By contrast, in areas where the effects of neo-liberalism and austerity are less omnipresent, people are inclined to experience the consequences more individually, to tacitly accept responsibility for (potential) personal failure and thus develop the need of an externalized scapegoat (Salmela and von Scheve 2017, 574; della Porta 2015; Wacquant 2010).

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The second crucial factor to explain the emergence of resentment against immigrants is a particular "ideology of exclusion" according to which "in times of scarce resources there would have to be a guarantee that immigrants were not to profit at the expense of the majority population of the social welfare state" (Flecker et al. 2007, 57; cited in Salmela/von Scheve 2017, 577). This shows that feelings such as indignation never take place in a vacuum. On the contrary, they are always already informed by (and in turn reinforce) ideological convictions.

Authenticity

The question of the adequacy of indignation is closely related to another challenge to assessing recourses to indignation, namely the relationship between an experience and its articulation, or the question of authenticity: The importance of this issue can be seen from the frequent reproach that manifestations are merely performances of indignation or stagings of rage – instead of genuine emotional expressions. Such reproaches can undermine both the claim to indignation as a motivation for action and the attempts at "educating others" by arousing indignation.

The background for this suspicion lies in a characteristic of emotional experience: Similarly to spirituality – and opposed to rationality – emotional experience is prone to invite such suspicion (Unrau 2018, 63). As Hannah Arendt (1963, 91) pointed out in a discussion about compassion and politics, this is because the human heart is "a place of darkness which, with certainty, no human eye can penetrate." According to her, the attempt to drag these motives into the public sphere lead to the dangerous atmosphere of suspicion which prevailed during the French revolution when everyone was suspected of being a hypocrite and failure to prove the opposite could lead to punishment on the guillotine.

However, instead of sharing her general suspicion against public displays of emotions, the expectation of "purity" with a view to articulations of emotional experience could be questioned. One way of doing so is by recognizing the important role of what Arlie Russell Hochschild has termed "feeling rules", i.e., "guidelines for the assessment of fits and misfits between feeling and situation" (Hochschild 1979, 564). They

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"reflect patterns of social membership" (Hochschild 1979, 564) and are susceptible to change over time (also Thoits 2004; von Scheve 2009, 293–94). Ultimately, the frequent recourse to indignation in progressive and backlash movements against the current world order can be seen as based on, and in turn contributing to the establishment of a feeling role of indignation. This makes it easy for right-wing anti-globalization actors to capitalize on a generalized understanding that indignation is an authentic and emancipatory reaction to an unjust world order. However, it makes a huge difference what and who is presented as a cause of indignation.

Effects

Besides the adequacy and authenticity of mobilizations of indignation, another criterion is on offer: The effect of the emotional experience of indignation. This is especially relevant when it comes to assessing indignation as a *mode* of action because this is where its effects both on the person experiencing it and on the outside world are most palpable.

One critique of indignation as a mode of political action is mentioned by the protagonists themselves, namely the possibility of it having no lasting effect at all for the political situation that caused it in the first place. Their response to this danger is the call to translate indignation into political projects. At the same time, some of the activists and authors also turn to the subjective effects of indignation. As can be seen from some of the quotations, they are aware of and celebrate the "liberating" effects of indignation on the experiencing subject but completely neglect the effects on the surrounding world. In the case of the neofascists of *Zetazeroalpha*, the suffering imposed on others is anticipated – "someone will cry now" – but it is not at all seen as a meaningful argument against violent action. In Hardt's and Negri's considerations on the meaning of what they call *Jacqueries,* they also do not take account of those against whom the discharge of indignation is directed.

While disregard for certain consequences of violent articulations of indignation may thus be found in both left-wing and right-wing activists

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and thinkers, there is a clear-cut difference with regard to who is the target of indignation: Right-wing, anti-immigrant and nationalist activists target alleged "enemies" of the self and associated groups, namely refugees, immigrants, the long-term unemployed, and political and cultural elites (Salmela and von Scheve 2017, 573). With progressive and left-wing activists, this is not the case. As noted above, it was suggested that one decisive factor in order to explain this difference is *repressed shame*: In a setting where economic failures and precariousness is individualized, real or anticipated shame for a loss of status is repressed and directed against minorities and elites.

This interpretation of what is invoked as indignation but is actually a transmuted expression of shame (as well as powerlessness and fear) also has important implications for an understanding of the subjective effects of the respective emotions. As pointed out by Salmela and von Scheve, the expressions of anger in the form of right-wing populism do not offer their adherents an "escape from shame" (2017, 586). Since the root causes for this complex emotional disposition are to be found in the combination of economic insecurity and an individualized interpretation of loss of status as personal failure, the threat of shame "either as present reality, or as an anticipated future scenario" (Salmela and von Scheve 2017, 586) will not be alleviated.

Another aspect of the subjective effect is suggested by philosophical anthropologist Max Scheler, who elaborated on Nietzsche's notion of resentment as born out of a feeling of powerlessness. According to Scheler, resentment is the result of a repression of primary emotions such as "revenge, hatred, malice, envy the impulse to detract, and spite" (Scheler 1998 [1915], 4), which cannot be lived out because the subject experiencing them feels powerless. As pointed out by Scheler, the French word *ressentiment* already indicates that the respective emotion is characterized by reiterated and perpetuated negative feelings, which never lead to action but rather to a "self-poisoning of the mind" (Scheler 1998 [1915], 4; Pulcini 2013). Such inhibiting consequences can be detected in the context of anti-immigrant movements. For example, in the case of Pegida, sociologist Hartmut Rosa diagnosed desperate attempts to "keep the world at bay" (Rosa 2016, 292). Instead of opening up to the world and welcoming

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the newly arrived refugees, anti-immigration activists like the ones from Pegida choose to withdraw into a fetishized community and try to isolate it against anything coming from outside, an attempt which is doomed to fail. They therefore also deprive themselves of new opportunities for encounters, exchange and personal growth (Heins and Unrau 2020).

Against this background, it is plausible to suggest that beyond the objective effects of certain forms of indignation, which can be criticized on the basis of ethical criteria, subjective effects of political indignation can be criticized as well. However, focusing on the subjective effects of indignation as a mode of action does not amount to assuming *pleasurable* political emotions indicate normative desirability. In fact, it is important to keep in mind that also indignation which is in line with emancipatory goals is not immune to becoming complacent or self-centered, reduced to "comfortable and fulfilling outrage which ultimately leaves untouched both subject and injustice alike" (Head 2020, 347).

6. Concluding Remarks

This chapter started out from the observation that extremely different groups of activists and intellectuals recur to indignation in the context of globalization. In order to have a better grasp on these narrative and argumentative mobilizations of indignation, it gave an overview of these occurrences, which showed that in both progressive alter-globalization and far right anti-globalist activists and thinkers, indignation is referred to as a motivation for political action, as a mode and as a goal. The narrative analysis of these references to indignation showed that authors often presented themselves as exemplary "experiencers" when narrating their own personal or vicarious experiences of indignation. At the same time, they inscribed accounts of indignation into certain ideational traditions and historical directionalities, thereby nobilitating their own and others' experience of indignation. Through these narrative techniques, the respective texts, be they short manifestos or more elaborate philosophical considerations, unfold their own performativity. It includes an exhortation to not only take indignation as a serious signal of current

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pathologies of world order, but also as an appeal to the audience to allow for and cultivate these emotions.

The subsequent discussion examined three potential criteria for a critical evaluation of appeals to the emotion of indignation, namely adequacy, authenticity and effects. The questions of adequacy and authenticity turned out to be most relevant for assessing the mobilization of indignation as a motivation and a goal for action. The issue of subjective and objective effects, in turn, is most important for an evaluation of the role of indignation as a mode of action.

When looking at the three potential criteria for the assessment of claims to indignation, certain ambiguities and draw-backs come into view. Assessing *adequacy* might entail claiming an epistemically superior position and dismissing subjective experiences of indignation, which could amount to domination or discrimination. A validation based on the *authenticity* or alleged lack thereof in a given articulation of indignation might run the risk of exaggerated expectations of purity vis-à-vis emotional experiences which neglect the pivotal role of "feeling rules". The evaluation of the effect of invocations of indignation is certainly relevant but it can be regarded to move away from the actual focus on experience and its articulation.

Focusing on these ambiguities, however, does not mean that emotions and their narrative articulation cannot be critically assessed. Rather, they might point towards the relevance of an overarching criterion, namely *reflexivity*. Asking about the reflexivity of an invocation of indignation amounts to asking in how far the respective recourse to indignation already contains the possibility of critical introspection and – possibly – revision. Such a critical introspection might focus on the above-mentioned criteria of adequacy, authenticity and effects, or it might go beyond it. If the mental capacity in which such a reflexivity is grounded has to be identified as reason is an open question. In fact, there have been interesting discussions of "emotional reflexivity" (Flam 2010).

Thus, the mere invocation of indignation is neither reactionary nor progressive, neither emancipatory nor oppressive. A critical assessment of the recourse to indignation may reveal crucial differences regarding

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the mode and background of such an invocation. So even if the overview of narratives of indignation in alter- and anti-globalist thinkers exposed some structural similarities, the preliminary critical evaluation of different modes of narrative mobilizations of indignation points towards their differentiation.

The omnipresence of indignation in both alter- and anti-globalist storytelling attests not only to the emergence of a generalized feeling rule of rage and indignation. It also illustrates how far right anti-globalist actors and intellectuals appropriate and *re-semanticize* emotions and feeling rules that are generally associated with left wing politics (Freistein et al. 2022). This might also be one factor that contributes to its appeal. In other words, whenever there are calls for the "indignants of the world" to unite in the name of their indignation, questions of adequacy, authenticity and effect, as well as reflexivity, could be entry points for critique. If the indignants have *a world to win*, it is worth asking what kind of world this would be.

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