Of Moral Outrage in Judicial Opinions

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Moral outrage is a substantive and remedial feature of our laws, and the Article addresses three questions overlooked in the scholarly literature. What do judges mean when they currently express moral outrage in the remedies portion of their opinions? Should judges express such moral outrage at all? If so, when? Relying on a branch of legal philosophy known as hermeneutics that deals with the interpretation and understanding of texts, the Article argues that in interpreting and understanding cases judges should express moral outrage when faced with individuals from communities whose voice has historically been at risk, is currently at risk, or is likely to be at risk of being silenced. The Article draws from water law, tort law, employment
discrimination, property, and family law, among others, to offer the core insight that moral outrage should be its own emphatic remedy, and a philosophically informed approach to judicial interpretation requires expressions of moral outrage from the bench to address ongoing injustice or the threat of injustice directed at vulnerable communities such as women and religious minorities in the current political climate in the United States.

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INTRODUCTION

The present political and cultural moment is one of perpetual outrage. The president is constantly outraged, so much so that he communicates his displeasure to the world at all hours, and in the process, outrages others.¹ Members of Congress and their constituents

are outraged by this president and this moment in time. Members of both parties are outraged at each other, so much so that they are shocked, shocked, that the other party and its supporters are doing what they are doing, which is an incomprehensible way of doing things, after all. Newspapers are appalled, appalled, at what things have come to under these leaders in this moment in time. Americans are disgusted, disgusted, at how bad things are in Washington [D.C.]. To live in the United States in this moment is to be angry, appalled, disgusted, indignant, shocked—that is, outraged—about something, some things, or about everything. Indeed, to not be outraged about something—even at the amount of outrage in public discourse—might be considered somewhat anomalous at this moment in time.

Moral outrage is a fixture of our laws. It encompasses such doctrinal landmarks as “the tort of outrage” (intentional infliction of emotional distress or IIED), the “shocks the conscience” standard in constitutional law, contempt proceedings at equity, jury deliberations in general, and—not so doctrinally—whenever a judge elects to insert outrage into a case or opinion. Moral outrage includes a number of
remedies including punitive and compensatory damage awards, as well as injunctions, among others. That is, both substantively and remedially, moral outrage is a mainstay of our laws and our courts use these legal tools daily.

In engaging with these legal tools, commentators have mainly focused on public expressions of outrage embodied in a number of substantive areas, including constitutional law, corporate governance, criminal law, environmental law, remedies law, securities law, and tort law, among others. Much attention has been devoted to punitive damage awards, in particular, and very little to expressions of judicial outrage in the remedies phase of a proceeding or opinion. Indeed, judicial outrage has also received scant attention from remedies scholars despite the centuries-deep trajectory of remedies law. For the purposes of my argument, judicial outrage includes not only what the judge herself does but also how she interacts with the work of the jury and the legislature.

Given the existence of moral outrage in our laws, the question becomes one of channeling. However discomfiting moral outrage might be, to what uses should judges put the outrage that is already available to them in our legal system, and when, for whom, why, and how should they do so? Since commentators have largely focused on the

9. See id.
10. See Sunstein, supra note 7, at 717–18.
12. See infra Part I.
13. See id.
substantive dimension of moral outrage, my argument dwells on its remedial implications, which bears on every other area of the law.14

The range of cases selected in this Article attests not only to the omnipresence of remedies in American law but also to the centrality of remedies in the resolution of a diversity of legal disputes from areas as divergent as water law and family law, among others.15 Remedies matter because whenever we discuss a substantive claim in any area of the law we also imply a remedy the plaintiff seeks. The remedy is the anticipated judicial result that informs and often frames the outcome of the dispute, and it often determines whether a case should be brought in the first place or not.16

My argument is straightforward. A philosophically grounded approach to legal interpretation (hermeneutics) underscores the necessity of expressions of moral outrage when the human dignity of vulnerable communities is at risk, such as women and religious minorities, in a range of selected cases.17 The three anchor cases on which I rely reflect when judicial moral outrage would be appropriate and when it would be misguided.18 Two cases are federal cases (water rights, employment discrimination) that were decided by the Supreme Court of the United States, and one is a state law case (family law) that did not reach the state’s highest court.19 The cases attest to the conditions under which moral outrage is appropriate and when its expression is misguided.20

14. Id.
16. See Douglas Laycock, Introduction to Symposium, Remedies: Justice and the Bottom Line, 27 REV. LITIG. 1, 2 (2007). As Laycock observes, it is the pursuit of a remedy that makes a lawsuit meaningful:

The remedy is what the client gets, the practical payoff of litigation, the bottom line of justice. Even when the client cares about the precedent, the precedent is important because it will lead to the grant or denial of remedies in future cases, and because the deterrent effect of those remedies, or the prospect of not having to worry about any more remedies, will guide the defendant’s behavior. Without the prospect of an effective remedy, a claim of right is meaningless.

Id.

18. See infra Introduction D.
20. See infra Introduction D.
A. The Kansas-Nebraska Story

Kansas and Nebraska were signatories to an interstate water compact apportioning water in the Republican River Basin, which straddles the boundaries between Colorado, Nebraska, and Kansas.\textsuperscript{21} The compact apportioned roughly 40\% of the Basin’s water to Kansas, roughly 49\% to Nebraska, and roughly 11\% to Colorado.\textsuperscript{22} In the first lawsuit, Kansas faulted Nebraska’s sinking of several thousand wells in the Basin that depleted groundwater in an area that produces wheat and corn, among other crops.\textsuperscript{23} The Supreme Court of the United States agreed with Kansas and the states negotiated a settlement.\textsuperscript{24} Within five years of the settlement, the states again relied on the Supreme Court’s original jurisdiction to resolve their complaints about each other’s conduct.\textsuperscript{25} This time, Kansas argued that Nebraska “had substantially exceeded its allocation of water” and Nebraska contested how water was accounted for under the settlement agreement.\textsuperscript{26} Kansas requested monetary and injunctive relief and Nebraska modification of the accounting procedures governing water use in the Basin.\textsuperscript{27}

B. The Elauf Story

Samantha Elauf, a seventeen-year-old Muslim, applied for a job as a “model” in 2008 at an Abercrombie & Fitch Kids Store in a Tulsa, Oklahoma mall.\textsuperscript{28} Abercrombie & Fitch (Abercrombie) refused to hire Ms. Elauf because she wore a head scarf or hijab, which the retail chain deemed would violate its “Look Policy” prohibiting “hats” or “caps” of any kind.\textsuperscript{29} Based on their sex, Abercrombie’s sales associates, known as “models,” were required to observe certain dress codes; these requirements did not apply to job applicants.\textsuperscript{30}

\textsuperscript{21} Kansas, 135 S. Ct. at 1049.
\textsuperscript{22} Id.
\textsuperscript{23} Id. at 1049–50.
\textsuperscript{24} Id. at 1050.
\textsuperscript{25} Id. at 1050–51.
\textsuperscript{26} Id.
\textsuperscript{27} Kansas, 135 S. Ct. at 1051.
\textsuperscript{29} Id. at 1275, 1278, 1283 n.6.
\textsuperscript{30} Id. at 1275 (“[Abercrombie requires] employees to dress in clothing and merchandise consistent with that sold in the store; requires that male employees be clean shaven; prohibits female employees from wearing necklaces and bracelets; requires employees to wear specific types of shoes; and prohibits ‘caps’ but does not mention any other head wear.”).
Ms. Elauf had chosen to wear a hijab since puberty as she considered it “a representation and reminder of her faith, a religious symbol, a symbol of Islam and of modesty.” For religious reasons, Ms. Elauf did not drink, gamble, or party; she prayed and read the Quran twice a month; prayed and fasted during Ramadan; and she tried to wear clothing that covered most of her arms and legs. To her interview Ms. Elauf wore a black hijab, “an Abercrombie & Fitch like T-shirt and jeans,” and her interviewer testified that she had previously seen Ms. Elauf wear a hijab around the mall; Abercrombie disapproved of the color black for models’ clothing. Disapproving of Ms. Elauf’s hijab, the district manager allegedly ordered that Ms. Elauf’s interview evaluation scores be retroactively lowered to make her ineligible for hiring, which was done.

On Ms. Elauf’s behalf, the United States Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) brought suit against Abercrombie, alleging workplace religious discrimination in violation of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (42 U.S.C. § 2000e-5(f)(1) & (3)) and Title I of the Civil Rights Act of 1991 (42 U.S.C. § 1981a). The EEOC “sought injunctive relief, back pay, and damages.” Under federal law, absent the likelihood of undue hardship on its business, Abercrombie was required to make a reasonable accommodation of Ms. Elauf’s sincerely held religious beliefs, which would include accepting her wearing a hijab in the workplace.
C. The Sheridan Story

Suzanne E. Sheridan and Charles L. Sheridan’s twelve-year marriage was a “rags-to-riches affair” that reverted to rags in 1989.\(^{38}\) The New Jersey couple’s “economic rollercoaster ride” was the result of unreported income obtained from Mr. Sheridan’s work as a truck driver in which position he “conspired with his employer to skim large corporate and institutional oil deliveries (billing for more oil than delivered).\(^{39}\) Mr. Sheridan and his employer “would then sell the undelivered, excess oil to third entities.”\(^{40}\) The illicit income allowed the Sheridan family to abandon their home and its furnishings to foreclosure following which they purchased a new home with cash taken out of a paper bag.\(^{41}\) “From a safety-deposit box, a shoe box, a dog biscuit box and from other hiding places, more cash withdrawals followed. Occasionally, they even withdrew funds from a checking or savings account, those withdrawals being primarily cash.”\(^{42}\) Under oath, Mr. Sheridan lied about the source of his income, and it became clear that the family had not paid any taxes.\(^{43}\) Mr. Sheridan had also been abusive to Mrs. Sheridan, and he had periodically assaulted her.\(^{44}\) Their illicit earnings spent, Mr. Sheridan was now unemployed and the family went hungry.\(^{45}\) As everything collapsed, Mrs. Sheridan sued under state law for divorce based on extreme cruelty; equitable division of marital assets; and for alimony, attorneys’ fees, and child support.\(^{46}\)

D. The Argument

Although moral outrage should have been expressed in both *Sheridan* (family law) and *Abercrombie* (employment discrimination), only the *Sheridan* court expressed moral outrage and for the wrong reasons.\(^{47}\) Relying on public morality, conscience, and public policy, the *Sheridan* court denied Mrs. Sheridan the equitable distribution


\(^{39}\) Sheridan, 589 A.2d at 1069.

\(^{40}\) Id.

\(^{41}\) Id. at 1069–70.

\(^{42}\) Id. at 1069.

\(^{43}\) Id.

\(^{44}\) Id. at 1075.

\(^{45}\) Sheridan, 589 A.2d at 1075.

\(^{46}\) Id.

of the illicit marital assets.48 The court held that an equitable court was “an impermissible forum for the division of marital property primarily purchased with funds from illegal activities.”49 Given that “it is repugnant to [judges’] oath that [they] sit mute in the face of acknowledged, demonstrated or potential wrongdoing,” the court took the extraordinary step of reporting the Sheridans’ failure to divulge their illegal income to the relevant authorities after citing the state’s Code of Judicial Conduct at some length.50 “We do not reward wrong-doers!” the outraged court exclaimed.51 The court found that the state and federal governments were “potential innocent entities” in the Sheridan case and it granted both leave to intervene.52 Finally, the appalled court exclaimed at the fact that Mr. Sheridan “just did not bother to get a job!”53 Relying in part on Blackstone, the court then awarded Mrs. Sheridan alimony, child support, and attorneys’ fees.54 For their part, all three federal Abercrombie courts failed to express moral outrage.55 Since her beliefs were sincerely held, since Ms. Elauf had provided Abercrombie with notice of her need for an accommodation of her religious beliefs, and since Abercrombie had not shown that it would face undue hardship by accommodating Ms. Elauf’s beliefs, the trial court denied summary judgment to Abercrombie.56 At a trial on damages, $20,000 in compensatory damages were awarded but prospective injunctive relief was denied.57 On appeal to the United States Court of Appeals for the Tenth Circuit, Abercrombie prevailed on the basis that Ms. Elauf had failed to provide Abercrombie with the necessary notice or knowledge of her need for a reasonable accommodation.58 The Supreme Court of the United States subsequently held that, for her to succeed under a disparate treatment theory for employment discrimination under Title VII, Ms. Elauf need not show that Abercrombie had actual knowledge of her need for an accommodation but instead that her need for an accommodation was a motivating factor in Abercrombie’s decision to deny her employment.59

49. Id. at 1068.
50. Id. at 1073.
51. Id. at 1071.
52. Id. at 1075.
53. Id.
54. Sheridan, 589 A.2d at 1076.
57. Abercrombie, 731 F.3d at 1115.
58. Id. at 1116.
59. Abercrombie, 135 S. Ct. at 2032.
Even though Nebraska had “blithely proceeded” to ignore Kansas’s water rights, the Kansas court similarly did not express outrage.\(^{60}\) The Supreme Court of the United States agreed that Nebraska’s “misbehavior” had resulted in its overconsumption of its water rights by 17%, which “resulted in a $3.7 million loss to Kansas,” and also that “Nebraska recklessly gambled with Kansas’s rights, consciously disregarding a substantial probability that its actions would deprive Kansas of the water to which it was entitled.”\(^{61}\) Indeed, the court had already found that Nebraska had breached Kansas’s water rights in a preceding lawsuit.\(^{62}\) However, the court denied Kansas’s request for treble damages, full disgorgement of Nebraska’s gains, and an injunction in this case.\(^{63}\) Exercising its equitable powers, the court ordered $3.7 million for Kansas for its losses, an additional $1.8 million in partial disgorgement of Nebraska’s gains since water was sold at much higher rates in Nebraska, and the court agreed to changes in the accounting procedures on Nebraska’s behalf.\(^{64}\) Indeed, given that Kansas was a lawsuit between states, the case correctly did not express moral outrage.\(^{65}\) Sheridan (family law) and Abercrombie (employment discrimination), on the other hand, were wrong not to do so when presented with disenfranchised individuals. Outrage should have been expressed in both Sheridan and Abercrombie but neither for the reasons espoused by the Sheridan court nor on behalf of the parties identified as “innocent” victims (the state and federal governments) in the same case.\(^{66}\) Sheridan involved a battered woman subject to domestic violence who was wholly dependent on her spouse for her financial well-being.\(^{67}\) As such, outrage should have been voiced on Mrs. Sheridan’s behalf. Sidestepping the domestic violence in the case, Sheridan expressed outrage instead over seeking a remedy after failing to report income, but not about the physical violence that was directed at a woman.\(^{68}\) Moral outrage should also have been expressed in the Abercrombie federal cases on behalf of a Muslim, a woman, and a teenager (Ms. Elauf) who had been discriminated against—a clear violation of federal law—by a powerful retail chain.\(^{69}\) While Kansas involved a key resource on which all life depends, expressions of moral outrage should be reserved

\(^{60}\) Kansas v. Nebraska, 135 S. Ct. 1042, 1056 (U.S. 2015).
\(^{61}\) Id. at 1053, 1055–56.
\(^{62}\) Id. at 1050.
\(^{63}\) Id. at 1058.
\(^{64}\) Id. at 1058, 1059.
\(^{65}\) Id. at 1055–57.
\(^{67}\) Id. at 1069–70.
\(^{68}\) Id.
for cases involving human beings and not involving state or institutional entities. 70

Not only does my Article identify moral outrage as a legitimate remedial result but it also addresses the normative question regarding the conditions under which moral outrage should be expressed, and this, significantly, by relying on a branch of philosophy known as hermeneutics. In Part I, I show how moral outrage is already part of remedies law. In Part II, I deploy the work of the German philosopher, Hans Georg Gadamer, to show that Gadamer’s insights regarding how we understand and interpret cases (hermeneutics or the art of understanding) are relevant to a legal discussion of moral outrage. Gadamer’s philosophical approach to hermeneutics is distinctive because it calls on the interpreter of a text (the one whose task it is to apply her understanding to a given text, like a judge) to acknowledge and confront the particular traditions and prejudices under which she labors and to account for their bearing on the interpretive exercise she undertakes at a given moment in time. 71 Gadamer’s focus on the situation of the particular interpreter is powerful because it asks the interpreter to struggle with her own historical context or horizon as well as the traditions and prejudices that sustain that context as she approaches a given case or text. 72 The interpreter’s task is to transcend the limitations of the traditions and prejudices in which she is steeped. 73 While it already has a powerful footprint in the legal literature, Gadamer’s work has yet to be applied to discussions of moral outrage in judicial opinions, which I do for the first time here.

Part III draws from Gadamer’s work and argues that moral outrage involves judicial vociferation of its rejection of misconduct at a given moment in time. That a judge expresses moral outrage at all tells us about that judge, about the context that she brings to her legal interpretation, and indeed about her particular context as it meets that of the case before her. Gadamer calls the encounter between judge and case the “fusion of horizons,” and I argue that moral outrage puts such a fusion of horizons on display. 74 Fundamentally, my argument is about the deployment of moral outrage in the service of human dignity, which is why a court like Sheridan is wrong to express moral outrage on behalf of an aggrieved party like the government, a sovereign party. When it comes to expressions of moral outrage, human dignity should trump concerns about sovereign and institutional dignity.

71. See infra Part II.
72. See infra Part II.
73. See infra Part II.
74. See infra Part II.
Given the obstinacy of noxious traditions of sexism/misogyny and islamophobia/religious intolerance in current American life (to name issues directly raised by Sheridan and Abercrombie), applying Gadamer’s insights allows me to focus on the need for moral outrage from the bench at this moment in time so as to emphatically increase the opportunities for judicial redress for social injustices long directed at vulnerable communities and to deter the targeting of individuals from such at risk communities. Such an emphasis also explains why the necessity for moral outrage is obviated in a case like Kansas (water rights), no matter how irksome Nebraska’s conduct might appear in a water rights case, since Kansas involves a lawsuit between states. Part IV thus focuses on both judicial and social commentary regarding key social issues embedded in this particular moment to which judges and jurors approaching cases like Sheridan and Abercrombie must be both sensitive responsive under Gadamer’s philosophical model.

My argument extends groundbreaking work by Georgia Warnke, Francis J. Moots, III, and William N. Eskridge, among many others, in the area of philosophical hermeneutics. In the area of remedies, it builds on similarly influential work by Margo Schlanger, Cass R. Sunstein, and Henry E. Smith, among others. My project empowers judges to express moral outrage on behalf of certain groups but only under limited circumstances. As such, my argument also builds on Martha Nussbaum’s powerful work on emotion in the law.

Specifically, a judge should, I argue in Part V, reserve her moral outrage for cases involving individuals from communities or classes that have been (1)(i) historically threatened or at risk; (ii) that are currently threatened or at risk; or (iii) that are likely to be threatened or at risk; and (2) whose voices have (i) been historically silenced or muted; (ii) are currently silenced or muted; or (iii) risk being silenced or muted. Such a test would not cover governments or similar parties suing each other (à la Kansas).

77. See infra Part II.
78. See infra Part I.
79. See MARTHA C. NUSSBAUM, HIDING FROM HUMANITY: DISGUST, SHAME, AND THE LAW 5, 13 (2004) (exploring the roles of disgust and shame in the law because “law without appeals to emotion is virtually unthinkable.”); see also Susan Bandes, Empathy, Narrative, and Victim Impact Statements, 63 U. Chi. L. Rev. 361, 367–68 (1996) (relying on Nussbaum’s work and observing that “The law perpetuates the illusion of emotionless lawyering and judging by portraying certain ‘hard’ emotions or emotional stances as objective and inevitable. Yet even a legal process devoid of such ‘soft’ emotions as compassion or empathy is not emotionless; it is simply driven by other passions”).
The test I propose would embolden expressions of moral outrage when communities at risk are targeted in any substantive area of our laws since outrage is about the voicing of displeasure (and even disgust and anger) in the service of a cause.80 Women and religious communities, for example, meet these requirements because these are the kinds of communities that have long been relegated to what Christine Desan refers to as “marchlands” in another context, that is, the peripheries of legal and social discourse.81 It is time we brought these communities back from the “marchlands” to the center of our legal discussions by conscripting powerful remedial tools in the service of their inherent human dignity.82

Under the model that I propose, once the test outlined above is met, a presumption will exist in favor of an aggrieved individual from such a vulnerable community that an outrage remedy should issue, and the effect of that presumption will be to strengthen the case for the requested remedy. Indeed, the presumption may increase the amount of damages available to that individual under the facts of a given case. No legislative act is necessary to empower judges to express moral outrage since they often already do so as a matter of public policy (à la Sheridan).83 Judges unsettled about relying on public policy might locate authority to express moral outrage on dignitary grounds in recent constitutional precedent from the Supreme Court of the United States that favors dignitarian approaches to individuals from historically vulnerable communities.84 At its most fundamental level, my argument wishes to provoke open and transparent discussion within our remedies laws of the injustices under which marginalized communities have long toiled and despaired.

Given the doctrinal elements of my argument—it is after all a doctrinal reworking of our remedies laws as they stand—it might be criticized for its doctrinal bent. But the doctrinal aspect is at the service of the Article’s normative power, given the Article’s original reliance on philosophical hermeneutics as it opposes and seeks to deter expressions of ingrained prejudices or those that might become ingrained.85 Doctrine is a potent tool in our endeavors to uproot and

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80. See Nussbaum, supra note 79, at 6–8, 10–12; Cass R. Sunstein, Some Effects of Moral Indignation on Law, 33 VERMONT L. REV. 405, 407, 408 (2009) (associating outrage with indignation, which may involve anger, disgust, and contempt).
82. See id.
85. See infra Part II.
discard injustice. As Todd Rakoff has argued, “[i]t is one thing to say that doctrine is not the only thing that matters, and quite another to claim that doctrine does not matter at all. The first contention is true; the second is false.” Doctrine matters because it “highlights certain social processes and hides others; doctrine sets the terms on which some voices will be heard, and others will be kept silent; doctrine creates incentives for certain kinds of behavior out of court; doctrine establishes an image of where the psychological center of a lawsuit lies.” Doctrine thus matters, and I explore the extent to which it matters in this Article, while advancing the normative framework to which the doctrinal element is subordinated.

My conclusion follows.

I. REMEDIES OF MORAL OUTRAGE

Outrage has long been an essential element of American remedies law. Commentators, however, have long overlooked its importance. The focus on remedies is central to my argument because, although American law casts “outrage” in both substantive and remedial terms, given my focus on outrage as a remedy, I focus solely on the remedial dimension of moral outrage.

Even after the merger of law and equity in American law in 1938 under the Rules Enabling Act of 1934, American courts have generally observed distinctions between two types of remedies, that is, legal and equitable remedies. The availability of a remedy at law (footnotes)
(a “legal” remedy) often implies the availability of monetary damages in that case.\textsuperscript{93} The availability of a remedy at equity (an “equitable” remedy) often implies the deployment of the court’s coercive powers in ways that often do not require awards of monetary damages.\textsuperscript{94} I begin first with the discussion of moral outrage at law before discussing moral outrage at equity.

\textbf{A. Outrage at Law}

Although some courts warn that a “judge may not permit his or her sense of moral outrage . . . to overwhelm the legal process,” outrage is an integral part of American legal remedies.\textsuperscript{95} Traditionally, the legal remedy most associated with moral outrage is punitive damages awards.\textsuperscript{96} Punitive or exemplary damages are extra-compensatory monetary awards whose function is both to deter and punish.\textsuperscript{97}


\textsuperscript{93} For legal remedies often not involving monetary damages but including a coercive aspect, see DAN B. DOBBS, LAW OF REMEDIES: DAMAGES, EQUITY, RESTITUTION 165, 585 (2d ed. 1993) (replevin for repossession of chattel to be contrasted with equitable injunctions; prerogative writs of habeas corpus, mandamus, and prohibition issued by law courts as opposed to equity courts).

\textsuperscript{94} By “equity” I mean an approach to litigants’ facts that originated in Medieval English law and that continues in American law as a distinct class of remedies generally distinguished from monetary damages. On the history of equity, see JOHN H. LANGBEIN ET AL., HISTORY OF THE COMMON LAW: THE DEVELOPMENT OF ANGLO-AMERICAN LEGAL INSTITUTIONS 268–70 (2009). For arguments against the endurance of equitable remedies post-merger of law and equity, see DOBBS, supra note 93, at 51 (rejecting “equitable” remedies as “anomalous” post-merger); DOUGLAS LAYCOCK, THE DEATH OF THE IRREPARABLE INJURY RULE 6–11 (1992) (arguing that courts no longer enforce the irreparable injury rule, which separates legal from equitable remedies in cases suing for an injunction (an equitable remedy)). On the coercive power of equitable remedies, see DOBBS, supra note 93, at 49. On the availability of monetary damages at equity, see DOBBS, supra note 93, at 370 (noting that restitution, which involves awards of damages, can be either legal or equitable, depending on the circumstances.). On “compensatory contempt” (also involving grants of monetary damages) at equity, see Doug Rendleman, Rejecting Property Rules-Liability Rules for Boomer’s Nuisance Remedy: The Last Tour You Need of Calabresi and Melamed’s Cathedral, at *28 (Washington & Lee Pub. Legal Stud. Res. Paper Series, Paper No. 2013-02, 2013), http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2212384.


They can also vindicate societal interests in a given case. Inasmuch as they can express anger or indignation, punitive damages awards also "have an expressive function." As a matter of law, punitive damages are generally available in cases involving "outrage and humiliation." Typical punitive damages cases involve medical and legal malpractice, toxic tort, and products liability.

Given the ostensible elasticity of the "outrage" element in punitive damages cases, punitive awards have courted controversy as well as constitutional review since courts worry about unreasonable and disproportionate punitive jury awards. Courts reviewing punitive damages awards often deploy a "shocks the conscience" test for such awards. Thus, punitive damages imply two outrage components. First, to warrant an award of punitive damages, outrage must be imputed to the defendant's objectionable act, and, second, to warrant an overturning of (or reduction in) a grant of punitive damages, outrage must be imputed to the award of punitive damages itself. Findings of outrageousness thus persist in American legal remedies in punitive damages cases.

Outrage also plays a role in compensatory damages awards. Traditionally, compensatory damages, also known as actual damages, are meant to make the plaintiff whole by placing her in the position

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98. Sharkey, supra note 97, at 453.
99. Sunstein et al., Punitive Damages, supra note 11, at 2086, 2096.
100. State Farm Mut. Auto. Ins. Co. v. Campbell, 538 U.S. 408, 426 (2003); see also Haddad v. Wal-Mart Stores, Inc., 914 N.E.2d 59, 63 (Mas. 2009) ("While discrimination of all types is wrong and unacceptable, certain discriminatory conduct is more outrageous than others. Punitive damages have been, and remain, permissible only where the defendant's behavior is particularly outrageous or egregious."); Loitz v. Remington Arms Co., 563 N.E.2d 397, 398, 402 (1990) (internal quotation marks omitted) (quoting Restatement (Second) of Torts) ("Punitive damages may be awarded for conduct that is outrageous, because of the defendant's evil motive or his reckless indifference to the rights of others."); Wackenhut Corp. v. Canty, 359 So. 2d 430, 435–36 (Fla. 1978) ("A legal basis for punitive damages exists where torts are committed in an outrageous manner or with fraud, malice, wantonness or oppression.").
101. DOBBS, supra note 93, at 317.
104. See May, 852 F.3d at 816.
105. Id.
106. Id. at 815–16; Bachrach, 636 Fed. Appx. 404, 406–07.
107. See DOBBS, supra note 93, at 312.
in which she would have been had she not been injured by the defendant. Actual damages awards typically allow recovery for medical expenses, lost wages, as well as pain and suffering. So as to prevent windfalls to the plaintiff, courts often require that all damages claims arising from the same transaction be litigated at the same time. Courts also often require that actual damages be awarded before an award for punitive damages can be made. Nevertheless, compensatory damages can include a punitive element, which incorporates outrage. As the Supreme Court of the United States has stated in reliance on the Restatement (Second) of Torts: “[c]ompensatory damages, however, already contain this punitive element.” Thus, the outrage element exists in both punitive and compensatory legal remedies.

B. Outrage at Equity

Equity, the other half of American remedies law, also incorporates the outrage element. While punitive damages have traditionally been considered legal remedies (given their monetary nature), courts sitting at equity have also awarded punitive damages, making punitive damages and their outrage element equitable as well. More usually, however, outrage at equity is associated with contempt of court proceedings where, for example, a pro se litigant continually interrupts testimony and the court orders her “to put her hand over her mouth, or to have her mouth taped, until the witness has answered the question.” When the litigant disregards the court’s order and informs the court that it has been “threatening” her throughout the proceedings, the court finds her in contempt. When she disregards court orders a day later and calls

108. See id. at 209.
109. See id. at 211–12.
110. See id. at 210.
111. See id. at 215, 315.
112. See id. at 312 (“Punitive damages may have some incidental compensatory effects; and ‘compensatory’ damages may have some incidental punitive effects.”).
113. State Farm Mut. Auto. Ins. Co. v. Campbell, 538 U.S. 408, 426 (2003) (citing Restatement (Second) of Torts § 908, Comment c, p. 466 (1977)) (“In many cases in which compensatory damages include an amount for emotional distress, such as humiliation or indignation aroused by the defendant’s act, there is no clear line of demarcation between punishment and compensation and a verdict for a specified amount frequently includes elements of both.”)).
115. See DOBBS, supra note 93, at 315.
117. Id.
witnesses liars, the court finds her conduct “absolutely outrageous.”118 After she refuses to apologize to a witness for calling him a liar and thus “purge herself of contempt,” the court subsequently orders her imprisoned.119 Contempt is also found where a litigant’s “outrageous conduct” involves calling the judge by an “obscene name,” denigrating the court, and where the litigant’s conduct also involves stating that the court was “railroading him.”120 Thus, outrage thrives in both punitive damages and contempt cases at equity.

Injunctions, another coercive remedy, also exist to quash outrageous conduct at equity.121 In asking courts to grant injunctive relief, litigants themselves use the language of outrage.122 Litigants request injunctions to prevent “outrageous conduct” “designed to annoy, torment, pester, plague, molest, worry, badger, harry, heckle, persecute, irk, bully, bullyrag, vex, disquiet, grate, bother, tease, nettle, tantalize, ruffle, assault, display obnoxious behavior or disturb the [plaintiffs’] peace . . . .”123 Injunctions issue to stop “outrageous and inflammatory” remarks made by a party to a bankruptcy proceeding.124 They issue to prevent the “outrageous” and involuntary submission of individuals to vaccination in the absence of proof of the medication’s effectiveness and safety.125 Injunctions also issue to stop the “outrageous” non-provision of appropriate food medication to diabetic inmates.126 Equity thus anticipates a litigant’s outrage and it makes a variety of remedies available to litigants able to prove that their outrage is legally significant, including punitive damages, contempt, and injunction remedies.

118. Id.
119. Id.
120. Butler v. State, 330 So. 2d 244, 245 (Ct. App. Fl. 1976) (“Appellant continued his outburst, expanding his original description of the judge and offering to assault the judge if his handcuffs were removed. By the time appellant ceased his performance he had accumulated six counts of contempt.”).
123. Id.
125. See Doe v. Rumsfeld, 341 F. Supp. 2d 1, 17, 19 (D.D.C. 2004) (citing McCargo v. Vaughn, 778 F. Supp. 1341, 1342 (E.D. Pa. 1991)) (granting injunction to six civilian employees of the Department of Defense (DoD) required to receive anthrax vaccine absorbed without consent because Food and Drug Administration’s determination of vaccine’s licensing to combat inhalational anthrax on which DoD had relied in mandating involuntary immunization had not followed the procedures to certify the vaccination).
126. McCargo v. Vaughn, 778 F. Supp. 1341, 1342 (E.D. Pa. 1991) (issuing permanent injunction on the basis of a “finding of defendants’ outrageous unlawful practices” and “directing defendant prison to establish a system for diabetic inmates to receive special diets and to assure them access to insulin”).
C. Commentators and Outrage

In engaging with the outrage element in American remedies law, commentators have expended considerable effort evaluating the relationship between public outrage and punitive damages awards as a remedy at law (as opposed to a remedy at equity). Commentators tell us that public outrage cannot be generated at will and “the degree of sanction is driven by moral outrage and various cognitive biases, not by scientific calculations of optimal deterrence. Deterrence may . . . be invoked as . . . justification for punishment, but lay intuitions about culpability and moral outrage . . . outweigh the factors that ought to matter most under a deterrence-based scheme.” Public outrage influences policy makers in the definition of criminal punishment and it results in irrational punitive jury awards that are both unpredictable and incoherent. Group deliberation increases outrage. Public outrage is at the basis of the punitive intent, which is then “translated” into a legal remedy or outcome. Category-bound thinking, exacerbated by the difficulty of “translating” a moral determination into a legal remedy or outcome, results in unjust departures from the foundational legal coherence principle that “the similarly situated [be] treated similarly.” Scholars show that public outrage is expressed in constitutional law, corporate governance, criminal law, environmental law, remedies law, securities law, and tort law, among others. In other words, while commentators have generally focused on public outrage and punitive damages awards in particular, they have not told us as much about judicial outrage in remedies law in general, which includes, but is not restricted to punitive damages awards at law and at equity.

Outrage has also received scant attention from equity’s commentators, despite equity’s history and jurisprudence, which spans several centuries. Flirtatious references to moral outrage appear in scholarly discussions of equity but no sustained account of the

128. Baer, Choosing Punishment, supra note 11, at 588, 589 (footnotes omitted).
129. See Sunstein, supra note 127, at 171 (“When legislators penalize misconduct, they are typically responsive to the outrage of their constituents.”).
130. Sunstein, supra note 7, at 718.
132. Id. at 1154–56.
133. See supra note 11 and accompanying text.
134. See id.
remedial importance of outrage at equity has been made. Commentators observe that addressing outrage has characterized the equitable remedy from its founding in the fourteenth century. Equity courts themselves have acted outrageously over time leading to much-needed reforms to the law-equity divide in American law under the Rules Enabling Act of 1934. Similarly, equity’s commentators tell us that equity has a strong foundation in morality. They tell us that equity courts can be considered courts of outrage. But commentators have not focused on the importance of outrage as an equitable remedy.

Equity’s commentators have focused on the civil rights dimension of equitable remedies. They have argued that equity is a coherent remedial system, that it effectively identifies and uproots opportunistic conduct, and that it upholds human dignity. And


137. See William F. Clarke, The Soul of the Law 234 (1942); David S. Garland et al., The American and English Encyclopedia of Law 151 (2d. ed. 1899) (observing that equity courts originally acted “to prevent the infliction of outrage and violence, the remedies of the common law being in many such cases clearly inadequate”); William F. Walsh, Is Equity Decadent?, 22 MINN. L. REV. 479, 481 (1938) (equity courts, in the original sense of the term, targeted conduct “in cases of outrage committed by powerful lords in clear violation of the common law”). But see Dennis J. Klinck, Lord Eldon on Equity, 20 J. LEGAL HIST. 51, 65 (1999) (doubting that “Lord Eldon [1751–1838, an important chancellor in the history of equity] would ever have acknowledged that ‘moral outrage’ was part of the equitable jurisdiction; rather there seem to have been cases in which he failed to restrain or conceal it as a factor in his judgment”).


140. Rudolph, supra note 38, at 375.


142. On equity as a system, see Bray, supra note 92, at 536. On equity as targeting
yet, implicit in all these treatments of equity is what is made both explicit and the focus of this Article. That is, quashing opportunistic misconduct so as to uphold human dignity in a civil rights case in the equitable system, for example, is not incompatible with the expression of outrage in that case. In fact, a constellation of particularly egregious facts of the sort emphasized in this Article may compel the expression of judicial outrage so as to uphold human dignity in such a case. The question then becomes—and the focus of this Article is—what does outrage mean in such cases and when should courts engage in its expression, for whom, and why?

I now turn to the philosophical paradigm that will inform my discussion of remedial outrage in American law. That approach suggests that it is urgent to rely on such a paradigm in discussions of moral outrage at this moment in time.

II. GADAMER’S HERMENEUTICS

In this section I lay the theoretical groundwork for my discussion of the necessity for judicial expressions of moral outrage. Relying on the philosophical hermeneutics of the German philosopher, Hans-Georg Gadamer, I examine first Gadamer’s approach to a universal hermeneutics that validates humanistic modes of understanding texts, including in legal cases. Before situating the importance of my work among Gadamer’s commentators, I consider the key insights for which Gadamer remains noteworthy and on which I will rely in my argument.

A. Humanities and Sciences

Responding to the charge that the humanities must espouse methodological approaches reminiscent of the sciences, Gadamer’s groundbreaking and highly influential work argues that understanding and interpretation are inseparable from the individual’s status as a being in the world no matter her disciplinary perspective.143 Since

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143. A fuller discussion of Gadamer’s interpreters follows below in Section II.C. Nevertheless, on the ontological aspect of Gadamer’s hermeneutics and the limits of Gadamer’s appraisal of science for a reader today, see William N. Eskridge, Jr., Gadamer/Statutory Interpretation, 90 COLUM. L. REV. 609, 614, 617 (1990) (situating Gadamer’s theories and cautioning that “When Gadamer published his tome in 1960, scientific positivism—the belief that appropriate use of the scientific method yields objectively truthful facts—was already on the wane”). On the ontological dimension of Gadamer’s hermeneutics, see also Francis J. Mootz, III, The Ontological Basis of Legal Hermeneutics: A Proposed Model of Inquiry Based on the Work of Gadamer, Habermas, and Ricoeur, 68 B.U. L. REV. 523,
the 17th century, Gadamer tells us, the French philosopher René Descartes’ (“Cartesian”) influence on western thought has been pervasive to the detriment of humanistic modes of understanding.144 Cartesian separation of the subjective and the objective led to a privileging of so-called “objective” approaches to interpretation deemed more “scientific,” “rational,” “unbiased,” and “empirical,” while humanistic approaches were deprecated as non-rigorous, irrational, biased, value-laden and, therefore, subordinate to the “superior” scientific ways of approaching the human experience.145 Our understanding, Gadamer posits, is an “art,” and the work of interpretation—the hermeneutic task—which also applies in law, is to appreciate how all understanding happens.146 Since understanding is universal, the hermeneutic task is itself universal and is universally applicable.147

Gadamer is concerned that so-called “objective” modes of approaching texts disparage consideration of the interpreter herself, her context, and her prejudices, and yet these all shape and condition the interpreter’s understanding of a given text.148 Nonetheless,

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533 (1988) (observing that Gadamer’s insistence on the importance of “play” “reveals our ontological openness to the world”).

144. See HANS GEORG GADAMER, TRUTH AND METHOD 278–79 (Joel Weinsheimer & Donald G. Marshall, trans.) (2d ed. 2004) [hereinafter GADAMER, TRUTH AND METHOD] (observing that Descartes separated subject and object and that Descartes’ idea of method was that the “methodologically disciplined use of reason can safeguard us from all error”). Indeed, the deprecation of the humanities remains a pervasive ongoing problem globally as the humanities and the training that they provide come under sustained attack in the name of those disciplines that are perceived more profitable. See MARTHA NUSSBAUM, NOT FOR PROFIT: WHY DEMOCRACY NEEDS THE HUMANITIES 143 (2010):

If we do not insist on the crucial importance of the humanities and the arts, they will drop away, because they do not make money. They only do what is more precious than that, make a world that is worth living in, people who are able to see other human beings as full people, with thoughts and feelings of their own that deserve respect and empathy, and nations that are able to overcome fear and suspicion in favor of sympathetic and reasoned debate.

145. See GADAMER, TRUTH AND METHOD, supra note 144, at 279–80; RICHARD E. PALMER, HERMENEUTICS 144 (1969) (discussing the “subject-object polarity” in Descartes and its privileging of the sciences); JENS ZIMMERMANN, HERMENEUTICS: A VERY SHORT INTRODUCTION 22–23 (2015) (discussing Descartes’ influence and the hermeneutic response to it); Francis J. Mootz III, Rhetorical Knowledge in Legal Practice and Theory, 6 S. CAL. INTERDIS. L.J. 491, 499 (1998) (“According to [Gadamer], hermeneutical understanding has been devalued because it stands outside the empiricist and rationalist accounts of knowledge, when in fact hermeneutical understanding is the primordial experience of knowledge that makes possible the derivative experience of scientific thought.”).

146. See GADAMER, TRUTH AND METHOD, supra note 144, at 157 (“The classical discipline concerned with the art of understanding texts is hermeneutics.”); see also PALMER, supra note 145, at 40 (discussing the origins and uses of the “art of understanding” in the field of hermeneutics).

147. See HANS GEORG GADAMER, PHILOSOPHICAL HERMENEUTICS 10–11 (David E. Lingo, ed. & trans.) (2d ed. 2008) [hereinafter GADAMER, PHILOSOPHICAL HERMENEUTICS] (discussing hermeneutical construction of a “bridge built between the once and the now”).

148. See ZIMMERMANN, supra note 145, at 22; Mootz, supra note 145, at 500 (“Gadamer’s principal philosophical claim is that our truthful relation to the world subtends but is
Gadamer shows, the “rational sciences” are themselves products of the “art of understanding.” The choice of a question to which the scientific interpreter will devote her research is itself a hermeneutic question that reflects the traditions and concerns of that interpreter’s particular time. The manner in which the scientific interpreter will approach her work is also hermeneutic or interpretive because it, too, is tied to the interpreter’s being in time or history. Indeed, the fact that science communicates through the medium of language underscores its interpretive nature. Even in the sciences, thus, the hermeneutic element is present because such an element is bound to the interpreter’s place in time and it cannot be completely overridden or uprooted. It shapes the questions asked, the manner in which results are interpreted, and the manner in which they are conveyed to a general audience.

Gadamer’s argument does not disparage the sciences. His approach acknowledges the achievements of the sciences but denies that theirs is the only way of engaging with the human experience. Gadamer does not seek to supplant scientific methodology and to prescribe instead methods for either the humanities or other disciplines to follow. His work is about identifying the philosophical bases for all interpretative understanding and what those bases imply for the interpreter of any text, including in the sciences.

B. Mediation and Horizons

But what exactly is “the art of understanding” to which Gadamer refers and why is it important? The art of understanding, Gadamer

not exhausted by modern technical-empirical science and that the Enlightenment picture of a monadic, prejudice-free subject decoding the world of objects must therefore be viewed as a mirage.

149. See GADAMER, PHILOSOPHICAL HERMENEUTICS, supra note 147, at 10–11.
150. See id. at 11 (“Thus what is established by statistics seems to be a language of facts, but which questions these facts answer and which facts would begin to speak if other questions were asked are hermeneutical questions.”).
151. See id. at 13 (“[T]he scholar—even the natural scientist—is perhaps not completely free of custom and society and from all possible factors in his environment.”).
152. See id. at 24 (“Even Descartes, that great and passionate advocate of method and certainty, is in all his writings an author who uses the means of rhetoric in a magnificent fashion.”).
153. See id. at 11, 13, 23.
154. See id.
155. See GADAMER, PHILOSOPHICAL HERMENEUTICS, supra note 147, at 35.
156. See id. (“But nobody would deny that the practical application of modern science has fundamentally altered our world, and therewith also our language.”).
157. See GADAMER, TRUTH AND METHOD, supra note 144, at xxvi; Eskridge, supra note 143, at 679; Francis J. Mootz III, Rethinking the Rule of Law: A Demonstration that the Obvious is Plausible, 61 TENN. L. REV. 69, 143 (1993); ZIMMERMANN, supra note 145, at 6–7.
158. ZIMMERMANN, supra note 145, at 7.
159. GADAMER, TRUTH AND METHOD, supra note 144, at 157.
says, is the act of mediation inherent in all interpretation. Media-
tion implies that when an interpreter brings herself to understand a
text she must bridge the gulfs imposed by temporal, cultural, geo-
graphic and other differences separating the text at the moment of
its inscription from the interpreter in the current moment in time.
Interpretive bridging is necessary because the “texts handed down
to us from the past are wrenched from their original world.” That
world is neither coterminous with that of the interpreter nor is it
self-revealing to the interpreter’s interest or curiosity. The inter-
preter thus traverses the chasm that would defy her attempts to
bring the text both into her time and her understanding. Assidu-
ous as she might be, the interpreter’s temporal location, her situation
vis-à-vis the moment of the text’s inscription, prevents her from ex-
cavating, resurrecting, and imposing the text’s true past on the
present. What she can and should do, instead, is thus bring the text
and its past into “thoughtful mediation with contemporary life.”

Given that understanding is mediation by a given interpreter, me-
diation is meaning at work. Gadamer’s dated use—by his own
admission—of the example of the “North American Eskimo tribes” is
telling. The “Eskimo tribes,” Gadamer tells us, have a history “cer-
tainly quite independent of whether and when these tribes had an ef-
fect on the ‘universal history of Europe.’” According to Gadamer,
an interpreter’s quest to understand what we now refer to as the Inuit
people is thus motivated by her position in time. The interpreter’s

160. Id. at 324 (“The judge seeks to be in accord with the ‘legal idea’ in mediating it
with the present. This is, of course, a legal mediation.”); see also ZIMMERMANN, supra note
145, at 47 (emphasis in original) (“For Gadamer, understanding works essentially as
mediation. Mediation is the heart of hermeneutic experience.”) (italics in original).
161. See GADAMER, TRUTH AND METHOD, supra note 144, at xxix (observing that legal
adjudication attempts to arrive at a “‘correct’ interpretation, which necessarily includes
the mediation between history and the present in the act of understanding itself.”); see
also GADAMER, PHILOSOPHICAL HERMENEUTICS, supra note 147, at 22 (discussing her-
menetical construction of a “bridge built between the once and the now”).
162. See GADAMER, TRUTH AND METHOD, supra note 144, at 158.
163. See id.
164. Id. at 159–60.
165. See Eskridge, supra note 143, at 617:
The implication of [the fact that understanding is being] for Gadamer is that
interpretation is neither the discovery of the text’s intended meaning, nor
the imposition of the interpreter’s views upon the text; rather, interpretation
is the common ground of interaction between text and interpreter, by which
each establishes its being.
166. GADAMER, TRUTH AND METHOD, supra note 144, at 161 (referring to G.W. F. Hegel
with approval).
167. See id.
168. See id. at xxix.
169. Id.
170. See id.
mediation of the history of the Inuit people thus creates meaning that is reflective both of the interpreter and of the time in which that interpreter makes Inuit history meaningful for the interpreter herself and her own place in time:

In fifty or a hundred years, anyone who reads the history of these tribes as it is written today will not only find it outdated (for in the meantime he will know more or interpret the sources more correctly); he will also be able to see that in the 1960s people read the sources differently because they were moved by different questions, prejudices, and interests.¹⁷¹

Meaning is thus both temporally inscribed and circumscribed, and it is also dependent upon the experiences that the interpreter brings to bear on the text in her moment of understanding.¹⁷² Meaning is thus indicative of the individual creating meaning. That is, at the moment of understanding, the interpreter may reveal more about herself and her time than she might about the text and its own time.¹⁷³

“Even the restorer or the preserver of ancient monuments,” Gadamer reminds us, “remains an artist of his time.”¹⁷⁴

The interpreter’s situation in time means that she brings to her mediation particular traditions and prejudices.¹⁷⁵ Traditions are the formative backdrop that infuse, inform, expand and/or limit her understanding.¹⁷⁶ Traditions place the interpreter within a temporal paradigm that predetermines her hermeneutic posture and they predispose her to certain prejudgments, fore-understandings, or fore-conceptions.¹⁷⁷ These prejudgments or fore-understandings are the prejudices that mold her perspective and inflect her interpretation.¹⁷⁸

¹⁷¹. Id.; see also Nussbaum, supra note 79, at 34 (“Today we probably hold some views that are just as mistaken as [those of the past that we reject], but it is difficult to know which views these are . . . .”).


¹⁷³. See Eskridge, supra note 143, at 622 (“Thus, a critic analyzing Dickens’s David Copperfield in 1880 will inevitably draw different insights from the novel than would a critic in 1960.”); see also Feminist Interpretations of Hans-Georg Gadamer 125 (Lorraine Code, ed. 2002).

¹⁷⁴. Gadamer, Truth and Method, supra note 144, at 150.

¹⁷⁵. See id. at 272.

¹⁷⁶. See id. at 352 (“For tradition is a genuine partner in dialogue, and we belong to it, as does the I with a Thou.”); Mootz, supra note 157, at 144 (“We can never read a text for the first time, so to speak, because the way in which the text will speak to us is already shaped by the tradition.”).

¹⁷⁷. See Gadamer, Truth and Method, supra note 144, at 269 (citing Martin Heidegger for the proposition that “interpretation begins with fore-conceptions that are replaced by more suitable ones.”).

¹⁷⁸. See id. at 304 (“We started by saying that a hermeneutical situation is determined by the prejudices that we bring with us.”); Gadamer, Philosophical Hermeneutics, supra note 147, at 9 (“It is not so much our judgments as it is our prejudices that constitute our
The text to which these prejudgments are brought is in constant tension with both the traditions that the interpreter brings to bear upon it and with the particular prejudices that act as a prism through which the interpreter’s understanding is refracted.179

The existence, nevertheless, of such traditions and prejudices neither makes the interpreter conservative as a matter of principle nor does it imply that a hermeneutic approach is antagonistic to transformative readings in the face of tradition and prejudice.180 Instead, the interpreter’s task is to be aware of the pressures exerted upon her by her traditions and prejudices (indeed, not all of them nefarious); her task is to bring such pressures to consciousness in her mediation; and her task is also to reach through and beyond them so as to engage in an open and potentially transformative conversation with the otherness against which they might inherently militate that exist in the text before her.181

For Gadamer, the interpreter is thus already “situated” vis-à-vis the text.182 That is, her position in time, her particular place in history, informs the scope of her vision when engaging with the text before her.183 The contextual or historical situation of the interpreter thus evokes her particular “horizon,” which is the field of vision that characterizes her space in time, and she might transcend her horizon by “see[ing] beyond it”:

Hence essential to the concept of situation is the concept of ‘horizon’. The horizon is the range of vision that includes everything being. . . . Prejudices are biases of our openness to the world. They are simply conditions whereby we experience something—whereby what we encounter says something to us.” (citation omitted).

179. See GADAMER, TRUTH AND METHOD, supra note 144, at 305 (mentioning the “tension between the text and the present”); GADAMER, PHILOSOPHICAL HERMENEUTICS, supra note 147, at 19 (mentioning the “tension and release that structure all understanding and understandability”); id. at 9 (“Prejudices are biases of our openness to the world. They are simply conditions whereby we experience something—whereby what we encounter says something to us.”).

180. See id. at 32–34 (rejecting Jürgen Habermas’s criticism of Gadamer’s views of tradition and prejudice as overlooking the possibility of transformative engagements with authority).

181. See GADAMER, PHILOSOPHICAL HERMENEUTICS, supra note 147, at 38 (“[T]he prejudgments that lead my preunderstanding are also constantly at stake, right up to the moment of their surrender—which surrender could also be called a transformation.”); GADAMER, TRUTH AND METHOD, supra note 144, at 305 (“The hermeneutic task consists in not covering up this tension [between the text and the present] by attempting a naive assimilation of the two but in consciously bringing it out.”); Francis J. Mootz III, Nietzsche and Legal Theory (Part II): Nietzschean Critique and Philosophical Hermeneutics, 24 CARDOZO L. REV. 967, 968 (2003) (“Philosophical hermeneutics challenges methodological approaches to interpretation by claiming that genuine understanding is possible only when the interpreter risks her prejudiced horizon of preunderstanding in dialogic experience.”).

182. See Mootz, supra note 181, at 967–68.

183. See GADAMER, supra note 141, at 967–68.
that can be seen from a particular vantage point. Applying this to the thinking mind, we speak of narrowness of horizon, of the possible expansion of horizon, of the opening up of new horizons, and so forth.\textsuperscript{184}

A text, too, has its own horizon, which must be embraced and confronted in the act of understanding.\textsuperscript{185} The discovery of a text’s horizon makes its ideas comprehensible to the interpreter even if she does not agree with their substance.\textsuperscript{186} By their nature, horizons past and present are “always in motion.”\textsuperscript{187} The interpreter moves into horizons and they move with her.\textsuperscript{188} When horizons meet, there is a “fusion of horizons” that “does not entail passing into alien worlds unconnected in any way with our own; instead, they together constitute the one great horizon that moves from within and that, beyond the frontiers of the present, embraces the historical depths of our self-consciousness.”\textsuperscript{189} In other words, the hermeneutic “horizon” that permanently surrounds and engulfs both interpreter and text is at once limitation and transcendence, specific and universal, individual and contextual.\textsuperscript{190}

Since mediation between differences is at the basis of the “fusion of horizons,” the concept of application, Gadamer shows, is inherent in such a fusion.\textsuperscript{191} “Application,” the “motivating power, [the hermeneutic] soul,” is also part of a unified hermeneutic process involving understanding and interpretation.\textsuperscript{192} Application in interpretation brings together past and present, tradition and interpreter, “I and Thou.”\textsuperscript{193} Application implies that the text is read by a given individual within a given hermeneutic context on which, as regards legal texts in particular, it has concrete bearing.\textsuperscript{194}

\textsuperscript{184} Id. at 301.
\textsuperscript{185} See id. at 302 (“If we fail to transpose ourselves into the historical horizon from which the traditionary text speaks, we will misunderstand the significance of what it has to say to us.”).
\textsuperscript{186} Id. at 302.
\textsuperscript{187} Id. at 303.
\textsuperscript{188} See id.
\textsuperscript{189} Id.; see also PALMER, supra note 145, at 244 (“The hermeneutical encounter is not a denial or negation of one’s own horizon (for one must see through it and can never see at all without it) but a willingness to risk it in a free opening of oneself.”).
\textsuperscript{190} These antinomies recall the hermeneutic circle. The idea of a hermeneutic circle envisions the movement between the part and the whole and vice versa, each dependent upon the other in the act of understanding. See GADAMER, TRUTH AND METHOD, supra note 144, at 268–78, 293–99.
\textsuperscript{191} See id. at xxix (“[T]here is mediation between the past and the present: that is, application.”).
\textsuperscript{192} GADAMER, TRUTH AND METHOD, supra note 144, at 318–19; ZIMMERMANN, supra note 145, at 51.
\textsuperscript{193} GADAMER, TRUTH AND METHOD, supra note 144, at 354.
\textsuperscript{194} Id. at 316; see also PALMER, supra note 145, at 235–37 (discussing the “Significance of Application” for the hermeneutic undertaking).
In application, the legal interpreter thus engages with the text in a “new and different way” and applies it to her chosen context.\textsuperscript{195} The hermeneutic task of application, nevertheless, presents problems for any interpreter for she cannot apply what she does not possess.\textsuperscript{196} Her engagement with the text—her ability to apply as regards that text—is necessarily constrained or enlarged by her inherent ability, itself circumscribed within a particular tradition and its prejudices.\textsuperscript{197} She thus applies and understands herself while interpreting the text before her.\textsuperscript{198} As regards legal texts in particular, “[t]he work of interpretation is to concretize the law in each specific case—i.e., it is a work of application.”\textsuperscript{199} In other words, hermeneutic application in the legal context has both individual and broader dimensions to which the legal interpreter must be responsive.\textsuperscript{200}

Does this mean that “truth” is irrelevant and Gadamer leaves us with nothing but a cacophonous world of subjective voices competing for dominance? Far from it. Under Gadamer’s insights, “when we say we understand, we are laying claim to truth.”\textsuperscript{201} Understanding, however, is not a benign undertaking that embeds each interpreter further in the refuge of the familiar.\textsuperscript{202} Gadamer underscores that conversation or dialog is a means of exposing individual prejudices and traditions to the challenge of others, which might thereby allow both sets of traditions and prejudices to transcend their contextual confines and approximate truth, if not truth itself.\textsuperscript{203}

Conversation thus requires the individual to transcend the limits of the particular and touch the universal by upholding, modifying, or abandoning the familiar refuges within which the particular might easily claim refuge.\textsuperscript{204} Hermeneutics exposes what lies behind, what is before, and it concerns itself with fore-understanding, pre-understanding, pre-judgment, ant[e]-cipations, and the un-said, as these are all conditions of understanding that might undermine understanding

\textsuperscript{195.} See \textsc{Gadamer, Truth and Method}, supra note 144, at 307–08.

\textsuperscript{196.} \textit{Id.} at 313. In some sense, what she already possesses informs her hermeneutic posture. See \textsc{Gadamer, Philosophical Hermeneutics}, supra note 147, at 9 (“Rather, we are possessed by something and precisely by means of it we are opened up for the new, the different, the true.”).

\textsuperscript{197.} See \textit{id.} at 21 (“[The art of understanding] is a skill in which one gifted person may surpass all others, and theory can at best only tell us why.”); \textit{id.} at 9 (“It is not so much our judgments as it is our prejudices that constitute our being.”).


\textsuperscript{199.} \textsc{Gadamer, Truth and Method}, supra note 144, at 325.

\textsuperscript{200.} See \textit{id.} at 316.

\textsuperscript{201.} Jean Grondin, \textsc{Introduction to Philosophical Hermeneutics} 141 (1994).

\textsuperscript{202.} See Eskridge, supra note 143, at 623.

\textsuperscript{203.} See \textit{id.} at 612–13.

\textsuperscript{204.} See \textit{id.} at 623.
and the conversation to which it aspires.205 As Gadamer puts it, “[w]e do not need just to hear one another but to listen to one another. Only when this happens is there understanding.”206 In other words, conversation (and the truth it might generate) are participatory exercises in which openness and transparency are sought and shared.207 Hermeneutics “remains continually ready to alter its opinion when better insight comes along.”208

C. Gadamer’s Interpreters

Both courts and commentators have cited to Gadamer.209 Before providing a brief overview of the commentators explicitly engaging with Gadamer (as so many implicitly rely on his insights), I offer first a summary of the court cases citing to his work. I conclude with a discussion of how my Article engages with Gadamer’s legal commentators and why it is important to rely on Gadamer’s work at this moment in time.

Courts have cited to Gadamer with approval.210 They have taken for granted his theories of interpretation and have appreciated his insight regarding understanding as an alternative to scientific positivism.211 They have cited to Gadamer at some length for his understanding of interpretation when they interpret the federal constitution.212 They have referred to Gadamer when noting that “successful communication depends on meanings shared by interpretive communities.”213 Thus, for judges Gadamer’s arguments regarding interpretation and understanding have particular force and are worthy of citation.214

More significantly, Gadamer’s work has generated an extensive legal commentary since the appearance of Truth and Method in

205. See GADAMER, PHILOSOPHICAL HERMENEUTICS, supra note 147, at 67, 88–94, 117, 121.
206. GADAMER, REFLECTIONS, supra note 198, at 39.
207. See id. at 40 (“I have suggested that the ideal of objective knowledge which dominates our concepts of knowledge, science, and truth needs to be supplemented by the ideal of sharing in something, of participation.”); GADAMER, TRUTH AND METHOD, supra note 144, at 271 (“All that is asked is that we remain open to the meaning of the other person or text.”).
208. GRONDIN, supra note 201, at 113.
210. See, e.g., Continental Can Co., 916 F.2d at 1157.
211. See Mercado, 756 F. Supp. at 1099 n.2 (noting also Gadamer’s “high regard for legal interpretation may explain the high regard in which he is held by some legal interpreters”).
213. Continental Can Co., 916 F.2d at 1157.
1960.215 Recent legal commentators have cited to Gadamer for his challenge to “pure rationality,” and they have also extended the application of his insights to constitutional law, contract law, copyright law, environmental law, evidence law, human rights law, immigration law, international law, patent law, and statutory interpretation, among others.216 They have derived from Gadamer a “critical

215. Given that a search for “Gadamer” returns 1,101 responsive articles on LexisNexis, I cite selectively to that literature in this Article. See LEXISNEXIS ADVANCE, https://advance.lexis.com (last visited Nov. 24, 2019). I also set aside the philosophical disagreements with Gadamer by Emilio Betti, Jacques Derrida, Ronald Dworkin, Jurgen Habermas, E.D. Hirsch, and Paul Ricoeur, among many others, which are taken up in detail in many of the sources to which I cite. For Betti, see, for example, ZIMMERMANN, supra note 145, at 133; Eskridge, supra note 143, at 624. For Derrida, see, for example, ZIMMERMANN, supra note 145, at 48; Eskridge, supra note 143, at 627; Mootz, supra note 157, at 157 & 172. For Dworkin, see, for example, Eskridge, supra note 143, at 646; Allan C. Hutchinson, Hermeneutics and Critique in Legal Practice—Work in Progress: Gadamer, Tradition and the Common Law, 76 CHI.-KENT L. REV. 1015, 1021 (2000). For Habermas, see, for example, ZIMMERMANN, supra note 145, at 134; Fred R. Dallmayr, Borders or Horizons? Gadamer and Habermas Revisited, 76 CHI.-KENT L. REV. 825, 826 (2000); Mootz, supra note 181, at 971. For Hirsch, see, for example, ZIMMERMANN, supra note 145, at 60; Eskridge, supra note 143, at 624. For Ricevuto, see, for example, ZIMMERMANN, supra note 145, at 62–63; Eskridge, supra note 143, at 632; Mootz, supra note 143, at 597. I also set aside discussion of Gadamer’s application to the humanities and religion. For a very brief overview, see ZIMMERMANN, supra note 145, at 57–98.

legal hermeneutics” that puts the interpreter’s own traditions and prejudices at risk.217 They have shown the transformative power of Gadamer’s dialogic emphasis for legal analysis, and they have extended even further the reach of his work by supplementing it with the work of other philosophers and thinkers in the service of justice.218 Commentators have also identified openness as a key political virtue in Gadamer’s thought.219 In sum, as commentators have underscored the centrality of a Gadamerian approach to the practical issues posed by legal cases, commentators have displayed the appealing depth and breadth of Gadamer’s importance for lawyers.220

To the extent that it extends Gadamer’s reach to a different area of American law while building on the work of previous commentators, my argument is consistent with these approaches. By applying Gadamer’s work to an area of American law to which it has not already been applied (remedies law), my work underscores Gadamer’s universal appeal.221 Similarly, my project shows that Gadamer’s work has powerful social justice and civil rights reverberations beyond those already identified by other commentators (that is beyond the important and often controversial areas of abortion, assisted suicide, capital punishment, gay rights, and race, among others).222 Here, I apply Gadamer to sexism/misogyny and religious intolerance. My work thus draws from the interpretive work that precedes it and pursues its social justice impetus in other areas of the law.


218. On Gadamer’s advancing the ends of justice by questioning tradition, see generally GEORGIA WARNKE, GADAMER: HERMENEUTICS, TRADITION AND REASON (1987). On the dialogic aspect of Gadamer’s work, see, for example, Eskridge, supra note 143, at 613; Mootz, supra note 145, at 501–14; Mootz, supra note 181, at 971 et seq. On reading other philosophers and thinkers as consistent with Gadamer, see, for example, Mootz, supra note 145, at 493 et seq. (Chaim Perelman); Mootz, supra note 181 (Nietzsche and Perelman); WARNKE, supra note 217, at 129–31 (Ronald Dworkin and Alasdair MacIntyre); Steven Paul Cauchon, Openness to Critical Reflection: Gandhi beyond Gadamer, in INHERITING GADAMER: NEW DIRECTIONS IN PHILOSOPHICAL HERMENEUTICS 102–20 (Georgia Warnke ed., 2016).


220. Supra note 216 and accompanying text.

221. Legal commentators have also criticized Gadamer on a number of bases. See, e.g., Robert M. Cover, The Supreme Court: 1982 Term—Foreword: Nomos and Narrative, 97 HARV. L.REV. 4, 6 n.11 (1983) (Gadamer is “disappointingly provincial”); Robin L. West, Are There Nothing but Texts in This Class? Interpreting the Interpretive Turns in Legal Thought, 76 CHI.-KENT L.REV. 1125 (2000) (Gadamer conflates moral and interpretive capacities, overridingy focuses on the human condition as essentially interpretive to the detriment of other approaches when in fact interpretation is a choice and is not intrinsically inevitable, and his work lacks social criticism).

222. See supra note 218 and accompanying text.
Since my horizon differs from that of other interpreters, my work is, more importantly, a departure from that which precedes it.223 As with the remedies literature, I have found no commentator that has examined the importance of moral outrage in the literature on Gadamer.224 As is the case in remedies literature, there are tantalizing references to outrage in the literature on Gadamer but no sustained treatment of the subject.225 My work thus introduces moral outrage both to remedies law and to the literature on Gadamer and it argues that judges should express moral outrage in their opinions.

Some might object to the normative dimension of my engagement with Gadamer. They might say that Gadamer is descriptive rather than normative, and that he explicitly abjures the deployment of a particular methodology in the service of truth, which I am doing by telling courts what to do when faced with individuals from communities at risk.226 In support of their argument, they might rely on other interpreters of Gadamer, many of whom I have cited above, who read Gadamer with other thinkers so as to provide normative impetus to Gadamer’s insights.227 Theirs, however, is one interpretation of Gadamer. Mine is another, and it is supported by other readings of Gadamer.228

Relying on Gadamer’s focus on openness, my Article focuses on the context surrounding a judicial trial at a particular moment in time as part of the relevant horizon to which a judge must attend in her adjudication of a case.229 Under my reading of Gadamer, a judge

224. See infra note 225.
226. Cauchon, supra note 218.
227. See supra note 221 and accompanying text.
228. See, e.g., Eskridge, supra note 143, at 629 (“Most of Truth and Method sounds descriptive (this is what interpretation essentially is), but there is an element of choice and normative prescription in Gadamer’s advice”); Mootz, Natural Law, supra note 216, at 319 (“Gadamer concludes that ‘putting at risk’ is the guiding normative implication of his philosophy, emphasizing that ‘hermeneutic philosophy understands itself not as an absolute position but as a way of experience. It insists that there is no higher principle than holding oneself open in a conversation.’”).
229. See Eskridge, supra note 143, at 620 (“Horizon is context, ‘the range of vision that includes everything that can be seen from a particular vantage point.’ Our vision might be focused on one thing, but we also have a field of vision, a horizon, that conditions what
must both explicitly take into consideration her own particular horizon and the context surrounding a trial at a given point in time (the judge’s and the case’s horizons). In doing so, the judge must account for the bearing of the case’s horizon on the parties to the case before her and she must also consider that horizon in her opinion in an overt manner in the service of social justice as she places her own traditions and prejudices at risk.

The judge is encouraged to draw on a wide range of contemporary sources, including newspapers, journals, and other secondary materials, which will provide the basis for her opinion that will express moral outrage in a given instance at a particular point in time because it is necessary. Such a requirement of reliance on a wide source materials is hardly a departure from what judges already do and it is hardly a departure from the horizon that they already bring to cases each day since they are immersed in a culture awash with such materials. Thus, “horizon” remains central to my reading as it is to Gadamer’s.

Why Gadamer? Why now? Outrage is not only a fixture of the current American and global horizons, but it is also a compelling way to address ongoing problems such as sexism/misogyny and religious intolerance, which are the concern of this Article. Current public discourse in the United States—in which American judges, jurors, and litigants are steeped and to which they all contribute—is rife with references to the traditions and prejudices that both bind and rend us. Gadamer’s work is about the place of such traditions and
prejudices in our lives in this particular moment as we engage with a difficult and often impenetrable past and about openly confronting and transcending them. Discussions regarding women in America, Muslims in America and religious intolerance in general (to name only a few) have become even more central to American public discourse in both troubling and novel ways. Women and minority religious communities have long been under sustained attack (again, among so many others to which I refer below). We need a Gadamerian approach in this moment given its liberating dialogic effect for vulnerable constituencies and communities. In sum, this is why Gadamer and why now.

III. MEANINGS OF MORAL OUTRAGE

But first, what is moral outrage, what does it do, and why should we have it in judicial opinions? To respond to this question, I return to the Sheridan case, the rags-to-riches-to-rags oil-skimming story with which I opened my discussion. In that case, recall that on the marry is fundamental as a matter of history and tradition, but rights come not from ancient sources alone.

236 See supra Part II.


239 See supra Introduction.
basis of public morality, conscience, and public policy the court was outraged at the Sheridans.240 The court also reported the Sheridan couple to the relevant authorities for failing to report their illicit income for tax purposes.241 “We do not reward wrongdoers!” the appalled court wrote.242 The court also balked at the fact that Mr. Sheridan “just did not bother to get a job!”243 It awarded Mrs. Sheridan alimony, child support, and attorneys’ fees.244 Here, I identify the vocal aspect of outrage, its Gadamerian “fusions of horizons,” and its dignitary aspect as constitutive parts of outrage’s importance in this moment.245

A. Outrage as Vociferation

Moral outrage is judicial vociferation of its disapproval regarding a particular infraction at a given point in time.246 In engaging with the litigants’ arguments, the Sheridan court referred both to the equitable nature of the remedy sought and it referred to public morality.247 “As the ultimate repository,” the Sheridan court stated, “the gatekeeper of that conscience and morality, equity’s forum can never be used to promote or condone crime or clearly defined breaches of public morality.”248 The court observed that “[t]he morality of which equity speaks is that of society and not the judge’s personal view of right and wrong.”249 Suzanne and Charles Sheridan’s marriage contract and the legal arguments that they advanced were only enforceable to the extent that they were compatible “with the laws or public policies of the state.”250 In other words, the remedy the Sheridan couple sought was moral in nature, which meant that the judicial response to their request for a remedy could be vocalized in writing freighted with the appropriate moral disapproval of their objectionable conduct at that moment in time in 1990.251

There was something Gadamerian about the Sheridan courts’ approach to the equitable division of marital assets (and the accompanying outrage that the court voiced).252 Indeed, the court need not have approached the issues before it in the outraged manner in which

241. Id. at 1072–74.
242. Id. at 1071.
243. Id. at 1075.
244. Id. at 1076–77.
245. See GADAMER, TRUTH AND METHOD, supra note 144, at 301.
246. See generally supra Section I.C.
247. Sheridan, 589 A.2d at 1070.
248. Id.
249. Id.
250. Id.
251. On the morality of an equitable remedy, see supra note 138 and accompanying text.
252. See generally Sheridan, 589 A.2d 1067.
it did, but for some reason it felt compelled to do so. Cases citing to Sheridan, some of which also mention morality and equity, make this point clear when they do not express moral outrage.\textsuperscript{253} Sheridan’s distinctive—and some might say “quaint”—reliance on equity’s conscience to express moral outrage is more likely to find analogs in opinions from before the passage of the Rules Enabling Act in 1934 than after.\textsuperscript{254} Writing in 1990, like the Sheridan court does in a memorable manner about equity’s “conscience”—and referring to that conscience a number of times in the same opinion—is, therefore, saying something about the meeting of the Sheridan judge’s particular horizon and of that case’s horizon, which gave rise to the judge’s iconoclastic vociferation of moral outrage in the case.\textsuperscript{255}

B. Outrage as “Fusion of Horizons”

To make clear the importance of a particular judge’s and case’s horizons in remedies cases, we need only consider the following facts from a Vermont property case. Roland and Leita Pion sued for an equitable remedy to resolve a boundary dispute regarding land that had once belonged to Mrs. Pion’s grandfather.\textsuperscript{256} At trial, Mrs. Pion admitted that she had forced “4 or 5” people off the land that the defendants now owned.\textsuperscript{257} She had threatened a previous neighbor with a firearm and had called him “cripple.”\textsuperscript{258} She had struck another’s dog with a broom, had called that particular neighbor a “fucking crazy bitch” and had told the neighbor’s children that “that their Mommy

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\textsuperscript{254.} See, e.g., Richardson v. Bristol Land & Improv. Co., 1 Tenn. App. 671, 684 (Tenn. Ct. App. 1926) (“A court of conscience cannot be compelled by any rules of law to outrage its conscience in the exercise of any supposed jurisdiction, otherwise it would cease to be a court of conscience.”); see also DENNIS R. KLINCK, CONSCIENCE, EQUITY, AND THE COURT OF CHANCERY IN EARLY MODERN ENGLAND (2010).

\textsuperscript{255.} Indeed, reliance on equity and its conscience characterizes nineteenth century remedies cases. See Duane Rudolph, How Equity and Custom Transformed American Waste Law, 2 PROF. L. J. 1, 6 (2015).

\textsuperscript{256.} Pion v. Bean, No. S348-00 Fc, slip op. at 11 (Vt. Sup. Ct. Mar. 11, 2002).

\textsuperscript{257.} Id. at 9 (Vt. Sup. Ct. Mar. 11, 2002); see also Brief for Appellants at 25–27; Pion v. Bean, 833 A.2d 1248, 1251 (Vt. 2003) (No. 2002-179) (acknowledging that “[a]ll of the behavior which Mrs. Pion is accused of took place when the appellees were out of doors, within view of the public; she never entered their home or confronted them anywhere but outside”).

\textsuperscript{258.} Pion, No. S348-00 Fc, slip op. at 5.
and Daddy were going to hurt them." Mrs. Pion had repeatedly called the police to lodge false complaints about another neighbor whom she had called a "hag," a "witch," and a "fucking bitch."

As a result of Mrs. Pion’s conduct, the next round of neighbors tried to sell their home for half a year. So they would not purchase the property, Mrs. Pion shouted at prospective buyers, which forced her neighbors to abandon their home to a state agency. As they moved out, "Mrs. Pion stood outside their home and smiled." Mrs. Pion was not done. She moved boundary markers on the defendants’ land, put up chain link fences on their property, filled in their neighbor’s stream bed resulting in a flooded basement, felled their trees and hurled obscenities at them, too. She called the defendant’s sister-in-law "a ‘slut’ and a ‘whore.’" Because the actual malice element had been met in the case, punitive damages were issued, but neither the trial, appellate, nor the Supreme Court of Vermont in the Pion case expressed any palpable outrage—certainly none of the Sheridan kind.

By relying on remedial morality of the Sheridan kind when faced with facts more egregious and shocking than those in Sheridan, the Pion courts could have expressed moral outrage. The Pion courts could have expressed such outrage, for example, when upholding an equitable injunction against the Pions for their misconduct. Similarly, Kansas—an opinion about the correct remedy when faced with continued willful misconduct in a water rights case—could also have expressed moral outrage, especially since it was a decision, much like Sheridan (non-payment of taxes), about offenses against a governmental entity in matters involving money. The Supreme Court of Vermont, which decided Pion in 2003, could have founded its expression of moral outrage against the Pions on a remedial conscience since the court had already referred to a remedial conscience in the years before Pion and it continues repeatedly to do so afterward. Kansas could also have done the same thing since justices

259. Id. at 6.
260. Id. at 7.
261. Id.
262. Id.
263. Pion, No. S348-00 Fc, slip op. at 7.
264. Id. at 9.
265. Id.
268. Id.
269. Kansas, 135 S. Ct. at 1057.
of the Supreme Court of the United States had also referred to equity’s conscience before Kansas and have done so in more recent opinions.\textsuperscript{271} Neither of them did, however.

While the Supreme Court of Vermont qualified the Pions’ acts as “egregious” and affirmed the trial court’s finding of a “vicious disregard and disrespect for the defendants’ personal and property rights,” it did not pay any attention to what Todd Rakoff has called the “social meanings” of the alleged objectionable conduct.\textsuperscript{272} Judicial responsiveness to the social meanings of phrases in \textit{Pion} such as “fucking crazy bitch”, “slut”, “whore”, “hag,” “witch,” and “fucking bitch” would see such damaging language as part of a continuum of the centuries-old subordination of women, even where other women were involved in the demeaning of women. Attention to social meanings would explicitly condemn such misconduct as part of the award for punitive damages, for example, or it might elicit written disapproval of such misconduct from the bench as part of the opinion. True, \textit{Pion} is, more than anything else, a property rights case about obnoxious neighbors.\textsuperscript{273} However, what makes the neighbors obnoxious also makes them outrageous in legally significant ways, which is sanctionable under current law and should be subject to an outrage remedy.\textsuperscript{274}

In some sense then, the fusion of a particular court’s horizon and a particular case’s horizon can foment or suppress an expression of moral outrage in that case. Different courts have different understandings of facts and different responses regarding the necessity of moral outrage. Although \textit{Sheridan} and \textit{Pion} were decided by very different courts, the cases are similar in that both cases involved what Henry Smith would refer to as opportunistic litigants trying to use the courts to sanitize their egregious misconduct.\textsuperscript{275} The Sheridans

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\textsuperscript{272.} Pion v. Bean, 833 A.2d 1248, 1259 (Vt. 2003); see Rakoff, supra note 86, at 83–94. To be sure, Rakoff focuses on official actions subject to constitutional review, but his point is a hermeneutic one. That is, context matters, and actions—including speech acts—are embedded within an expansive context that defines their contours and bearing. As Rakoff notes, “making social meaning the direct subject of legal inquiry will indeed make officials more careful to avoid creating invidious meanings.” \textit{Id.} at 92.

\textsuperscript{273.} \textit{Pion}, 833 A.2d at 1251.

\textsuperscript{274.} Klass, supra note 96, at 90.

\textsuperscript{275.} On opportunism, see supra note 139 and accompanying text.

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sued to divide illegal money and the Pions sued to destroy their neighbors. Yet, only Sheridan expressed moral outrage—and for failure to pay taxes while requesting a judicial remedy. The horizons that individual judges bring to each case and the horizons that they confront at given points in time thus matter and they have some bearing on expressions of moral outrage.

What kind of horizon might an individual judge bring to a case? Sheridan’s indignation at failure to pay taxes while requesting a remedy may have something to do with the litigants’ implicit attack on the institution of marriage, whose upholding may be central to the judge’s own particular horizon, traditions and prejudices. Sheridan notes, for example, that “marriage in terms both human and material is afforded great deference and many societal protections.” It is “a social relationship subject in all respects to the state’s police power.” Marriage “creates the most important relation in life.” Concerns about marriage may motivate the displacement of moral outrage from the dissolution of marriage (which is legally acceptable) to the failure to pay taxes while requesting a remedy (which is legally unacceptable). Outrage can thus be a response to a perceived attack on particular traditions and prejudices to which a particular judge is attentive.

Pion, in particular, presented courts with numerous opportunities to express moral outrage, which were eschewed. Almost eight months before the Supreme Court of Vermont handed down Pion, a lower Vermont court had found the Pions in contempt and had fined them:

[T]he state court found that the Pions had violated Judgment 1 (entered March 11, 2002), held the Pions in contempt, and ordered them to pay a $1,000 sanction to the Beans for violating that order. As a specific rationale for finding contempt, Judgment 2 cited a paragraph from Judgment 1 that ordered the Pions to cease their harassment of the Beans, and forbade the Pions from surveilling the Beans’ property by way of taking photographs or using binoculars.

277. Sheridan, 589 A.2d at 1068.
278. Id. at 1069–70.
279. Id. at 1070.
280. Id.
281. Id. (quoting Maynard v. Hill, 125 U.S. 190 (1888)).
282. Sheridan, 589 A.2d at 1068.
Even after the Supreme Court of Vermont opinion, the Pion case proved interminable. The Pions disputed (and lost) their appeal of an award of construction costs for replacement of the defendants’ stone wall.285 The Pions ignored court orders.286 They unsuccessfully sought to discharge the contempt, punitive, and compensatory damages against them in a bankruptcy proceeding.287 Again, this fact validates Gadamer’s insight that particular traditions, prejudices, and fore-understandings are at play, even in judicial interpretation, and failure to account for them does not stop them from driving the outcome of a given case.

C. Outrage as Dignity

From a dignitarian perspective, moral outrage identifies conduct that is difficult to understand and accept because it violates the inherent human dignity of the individual being targeted.288 Inherent human dignity, as David Luban has powerfully argued, applies to everyone, no matter who they are and no matter our personal misgivings about them:

Once we accept that human dignity requires litigants to be heard, the justification of the advocate becomes clear. People may be poor public speakers. They may be inarticulate, unlettered, mentally disorganized, or just plain stupid. They may know nothing of the law, and so be unable to argue its interpretation. Knowing no law, they may omit the very facts that make their case, or focus on pieces of the story that are irrelevant or prejudicial. They may be unable to utilize basic procedural rights such as objecting to their adversary’s leading questions. Their voices may be nails on a chalkboard or too mumbled to understand. They may speak a dialect, or for that matter know no English. None of this should matter. Human dignity does not depend on whether one is stupid or smooth. Hence the need for the advocate. Just as a non-English speaker must be provided an interpreter, the legally mute should have—in the very finest sense of the term—a mouthpiece.289


286. Pion, 2005 WL 6152658, at *1 (Vt. Sup. Ct. 2005) (“The trial court’s final judgment included several specific orders to address the property damage plaintiffs caused. The court issued the specific orders because plaintiffs had not followed its previous orders to make repairs during the pendency of the case.”).


288. Luban, Human Rights Pragmatism, supra note 17, at 211.

289. Luban, Lawyers as Upholders, supra note 17, at 819.
As Luban’s insight implies (and applies within the context of moral outrage), dignity does two things for moral outrage. First, it implies that certain actions are inimical to inherent human dignity because those actions humiliate a given individual, usually on the basis of the individual’s perceived belonging to a class or community that is deemed inferior and worthy of debasement. Second, Luban’s insight implies that outrage, which is something fundamentally vocal, vocalized, vociferous, can be aligned with the necessity to be heard in a given situation and that the court in such a case acts, to use Luban’s word, as the targeted community or class’s “mouthpiece.” Outrage speaks and it also purports to speak on behalf of. Outrage underscores the failure of conversation, the breakdown of dialogic openness to the other, and it heightens the necessity of unusually vocal speech so that the other’s plight might be heard and the parties might come to some understanding of the truth of the situation.

But isn’t outrage always late? Doesn’t it always arise after the objectionable act has happened? And if outrage is effective, then why does its mere expression not foment the desired change once and for all? Even if late, outrage still holds the perpetrator accountable and it orders her participation at the dialogic exchange that she has long rejected by raising the tone of the discussion, which appears to be the only way she will bring herself to understand at this moment in time. In this sense, outrage involves a measure of “resentment,” which is about “the unremitting denunciation of injustice.” Resentment—

stands for a refusal to ‘normalise’ the crime, to make it part of the ordinary/explicable/accountable flow of things, to integrate it into a consistent and meaningful life-narrative; after all possible explanations, it returns with its question: ‘Yes, I got all this, but nevertheless, how could you have done it? Your story about it doesn’t make sense!’

Outrage thus speaks to a failure of understanding, and it recalls the horror of the occurrence of those facts in this moment and why they

290. Luban, Human Rights Pragmatism, supra note 17, at 211.
291. Luban, Lawyers as Upholders, supra note 17, at 822.
292. Id. at 830.
293. Bandes, supra note 79, at 368.
294. Id.
295. S. LAVOJ, VIOLENCE, in his treatment of “left-liberal humanitarian discourse on violence,” his work is not explicitly about moral outrage, but about systemic and other forms of violence. Id. at 6.
296. Id.
are inimical to the dignitarian society to which we aspire at this point in time. Finally, outrage can and does bring about change. Some discriminatory acts, however, are so ingrained and embedded in our judicial and social structures that they take longer to dislodge than others—hence, more outrage is necessary to do so.

Outrage, nevertheless, can be unhelpful in some cases. Outrage can function as a smokescreen. That is, outrage can churn up a cloud of smoke that prevents people from seeing what the outraged person is doing behind the veil of smoke. Take, for example, Sheridan's indignation over a request for a remedy following a failure to pay taxes. The real outrage in that case might be the court's displaced displeasure over the dissolution of a marriage, which it hides behind failure to pay taxes. Or, let's assume, arguendo, that in the water rights case Kansas sued Nebraska not because Kansas was outraged over Nebraska's willful breach of its water rights (resulting in a $3.7 million loss) but because Kansas realized that Nebraska had long enjoyed the enviable position of having 49% of the Basin's water rights (nine percent more than Kansas) and the only way to get Nebraska back to the negotiation table was to sue Nebraska promptly and often in the Supreme Court of the United States. Outrage is thus not self-justifying and is not always proof that the target of the outrage has done something outrageous.

Outrage can also displace attention. It can effortlessly redirect its audiences to a tangential or non-issue (a sideshow) that it would like others to believe is now the most significant issue of all. Indeed, outrage can terminate the dialogic exchange that is at the heart of Gadamer's meaningful communication because it is so vocal that it can overwhelm the other's ability to speak openly and in the spirit of a truthful exchange. In other words, outrage can exhaust so that those exposed to it are no longer in any position to engage meaningfully in a conversation.

300. See JEFFREY M. BERRY & SARAH SOBIERAJ, THE OUTRAGE INDUSTRY 6 (2014) (finding “that outrage tactics such as ideological selectivity, vilification of opponents, and fear mongering make talking politics beyond our most intimate circles extraordinarily difficult, complicating our ability to have meaningful discussions about politics in our communities”).
Given these dangers, the issue arises regarding when it is appropriate to deploy moral outrage in our legal system. Under the paradigm I propose, judicial outrage of the kind I envisage must be reserved for specific circumstances in which individuals from identifiable and vulnerable communities are under attack or risk being under attack. Such communities include women and those who face religious intolerance. Under my reading, outrage will not be a smoke-screen because it will protect identified dignitary interests. It will not divert attention because it will focus on specific vulnerability at law and in society and will attempt to remedy it. Finally, outrage will only end discussion to the extent that any judicial opinion can (in other words, it cannot).

The goal, thus, of moral outrage in a judicial opinion will not be to exhaust any litigant or reader of a particular judicial opinion but to commit judges to the upholding of the inherent dignity of vulnerable litigants by strengthening the range of remedies available to the disenfranchised. In this context, expressions of moral outrage will reinvigorate in the process the conversation that has closed or become blocked.

IV. This Moment in Moral Outrage

Gadamer reminds us that interpretation involves a dialogic exchange whose goal it is to transcend the barriers that would thwart meaningful conversation. Outrage can thus be considered to speak to the other loudly so as to pierce the other’s inability to hear in this moment and make such a dialogic exchange possible because this moment presents a number of dangerous issues (raised, for example, by the Sheridan, Abercrombie, and Pion facts) that affect and damage so many lives in the United States, as they have done for a long time. Sexism/misogyny is such a pressing issue. Sexism/misogyny is present in the domestic violence that Susan Sheridan suffered, in the background of Abercrombie’s treatment of Samantha Elauf, and it is also present in the Pion case. Religious intolerance is another. In the Abercrombie case, Islamophobia specifically and religious intolerance more generally are on display. Outrage requires the court to talk to the litigant and to the party who are in violation of

Notes:

303. See supra Part II.
304. Berry & Sobieraj, supra note 300, at 6.
306. See Abercrombie, 789 F. Supp. 2d at 1277.
the other’s inherent dignity. Here, I begin by recognizing that outrage is a fixture of this particular moment in the United States before I look specifically at the sexism/misogyny and Islamophobia (religious intolerance) that are also omnipresent in this moment’s horizon and that are deserving of expressions of moral outrage.

A. This Moment in Moral Outrage

The present political and cultural moment is one of perpetual outrage. The president is constantly outraged, so much so that he communicates his displeasure to the world at all hours and, in the process, outrages others.\(^{307}\) Members of Congress and their constituents are outraged by this president and this moment in time.\(^{308}\) Members of both parties are outraged at each other, so much so that they are shocked, shocked, that the other party and its supporters are doing what they are doing, which is an incomprehensible way of doing things, after all.\(^{309}\) Newspapers are appalled, appalled, at what things have come to under these leaders in this moment in time.\(^{310}\) Americans are disgusted, disgusted, at how bad things are in Washington [D.C.].\(^{311}\) To live in the United States in this moment is to be angry, appalled, disgusted, indignant, shocked—that is, outraged—about something, some things, or about everything. Indeed, to not be


outraged about something—even at the amount of outrage in public discourse—might be considered somewhat anomalous at this moment in time.

B. This Moment in Sexism/Misogyny

Sexism/misogyny stubbornly persists with often violent results for women and those identified as women. Sexism/misogyny goes to the heart of the traditions that shape us as interpreters and the prejudices that we bring to bear in reading legal texts. Sexism/misogyny also goes to the definitions of inherent dignity that we support as worthy of the world in which we want to live, a world in which women and those likened to women should not be demeaned. Legislators have sometimes responded to the discriminatory treatment of women.312 Courts and commentators have documented its nefarious effects in the American workplace.313 American newspapers continue to document its effects in this moment of American life.314 I look at each of these briefly in turn since they, too, characterize the present horizon under a Gadamerian reading.

Various laws in recent years have identified some of the issues that women in American life continue to face.315 At the federal level, the Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act of 2013 provides support for women who are victims of rape, domestic violence, dating violence, stalking, as well as support for Native Americans, immigrant women, lesbians, and women with disabilities.316 The Affordable Care Act requires health insurance companies to pay for birth control without copays or deductibles.317 The Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act of 2009 targets compensation discrimination to which women are still widely subjected.318 Similarly, a number of states

314. Kahan, supra note 11, at 607 (observing that reliance on newspapers is useful when discussing public morality, values, and social meaning):
   I thus draw liberally on media reports, op-ed pieces, and letters to the editor, as well as legislative histories and judicial opinions, not because I believe (necessarily) that the arguments made in them are persuasive, but because the sentiments they express provide evidence of how the public perceives alternative sanctions.
315. Indeed, the argument here is not that these laws are sufficient to address the problems that women face, but that the existence of these laws displays some of the issues that women face in American life.
have also moved against compensation discrimination. Legislators have thus identified these acts as prejudicial to women, and such acts are part of the horizon that both judges and litigants bring to judicial proceedings.

Courts and commentators have similarly acknowledged that the prejudicial treatment of women is ongoing. They have discussed sexism/misogyny in employment discrimination cases, which includes various forms of discrimination against women in the American workplace. Women are sexually assaulted, harassed, insulted, passed over for promotion, and paid less than men, among other workplace problems. Women are denied employment, lose their jobs when pregnant, are not paid when on maternity leave in most states, and they are deemed less diligent and less intelligent solely on the basis of their status as women. These are some of the recalcitrant issues that are deeply rooted in this moment’s horizon.

American newspapers document many of the same issues. They report that the presidency itself has taints of sexism/misogyny.
Congress and the judiciary similarly struggle with these issues. Newspapers also tell us that men who have sexually assaulted women have received lenient sentences. Newspapers recount the story of a doctor entrusted with the medical care of hundreds of young female athletes that represent our country whom the doctor sexually assaults over several years. A number of prominent men are also said to have sexually assaulted and discriminated against women. These are some of the pressing issues in this moment, in this horizon, facing cases like Sheridan, Abercrombie, and Pion and the courts understanding, interpreting and applying the law to them.

C. This Moment in Religious Intolerance

Islamophobia and religious intolerance of the type evoked in Abercrombie are similarly deeply embedded in this moment. Muslims are assumed to be un-American, terrorists, and they are widely discriminated against. Muslims abroad are also presumed to be terror threats and the executive may now enforce bans against their entry to the United States. Religious intolerance in this moment


has also deeply affected the Jewish community as anti-Semitism surges, and religious intolerance also damages and makes life difficult for members of other minority communities.  

Commentators remind us that Islamophobia has long been a phenomenon in America. Muslims are attacked, as are their sacred spaces, and their allegiance to the country of their birth, or to their adopted home (as the case may be), the United States, is often questioned. Muslims are forced to overcome suspicion regarding their belonging, their commitment to democratic values, failing which they are considered un-American and terrorists. Islamophobia is damaging because it renders members of a religious group suspect and suspicious. Islamophobia also identifies all Muslims as potential threats to American values with real consequences for how Muslims in America must order their lives.

The Jewish community similarly faces intolerance. Courts and commentators have documented the pernicious continuing effects of anti-Semitism. Jewish sacred grounds have been desecrated and the Jewish community is subject to hate speech and other forms of violence. Anti-Semitism is damaging and Jews are made to fear for their safety in their own country, their own home, or in their adopted


332. Beydoun, supra note 328.


334. See generally Beydoun, supra note 329.

335. Id. at 1737, 1747, 1773.

336. Id. at 1739, 1757.


home, as the case may be. These forms of vicious intolerance, and others, are deeply embedded in our current horizon and they must be acknowledged and resisted as prejudices and even traditions that exist in this current moment.

V. APPLICATION OF MORAL OUTRAGE

It is one thing to recognize that women and minority religious communities are at risk but another to state how moral outrage should apply in judicial opinions in cases involving women and minority religious communities. Should all outraged opinions include Sheridan-type exclamation points? Might [outraged] silence be an expression of outrage, as in Kansas? Would it be preferable instead to award the requested remedy (like in Pion) and simply characterize the facts as “egregious”? Maybe Abercrombie’s approach is best because not even the word “egregious” appears in the opinion yet the aggrieved party gets a damages award and wins the case?

Whatever approach a judge deploys as her own horizon fuses with those of the case before her, it should be apparent from her judicial opinion that the court is expressing public outrage on behalf of a community or class to which a particular litigant belongs and is making certain traditions and prejudices explicit in an effort to combat and overcome them. Given outrage’s distinctive vociferation, expression of moral outrage is right where a community or class has been at risk, is currently is at risk, or is likely to be at risk of being muted or silenced. That is, I propose a model for the expression of moral outrage that would reserve its expression for cases involving communities or classes at risk, like women or religious minorities.

A. Community or Class

Central to my analysis is the emphasis on a community or class that has historically been threatened or at risk, is currently threatened or at risk, or that is likely to be threatened or at risk. Such a focus addresses both ingrained traditions or prejudices as well as nascent prejudices against a given group or community. The focus on the community or class and not on the particular litigant is meant to emphasize that the harm in a given case (in which moral outrage must be expressed) is a dignitary harm against a class of individuals of which this individual is a part, and the community of which she

342. EEOC v. Abercrombie, 731 F.3d 1106 (10th Cir. 2013). But see id. at 1248.
is a part needs heightened judicial protection at this moment in time. The harm done by the aggressor in such a case is, more importantly, an attack on public morality, which privileges open communication. To provide as much interpretive flexibility as possible to judges and juries under the circumstances, I use both “community or class” in my test.

Courts and commentators have already identified a number of communities or classes at risk. Immigrants and immigrant workers are vulnerable communities.343 Women can constitute an “especially vulnerable group.”344 Racial minorities are part of vulnerable communities.345 Gays and lesbians are part of a community at risk.346 The transgender community is particularly at risk.347 Prisoners can be part of a community at risk.348 The disabled, the elderly, and the poor have also been identified as “traditionally vulnerable.”350 That is, these are the kinds of communities, constituencies, or groups that have been historically threatened and that are still at risk.


345. See, e.g., United States v. Bakenhus, 1997 U.S. App. LEXIS 15320, at *10 (6th Cir. 1997) (“In this case, the minority status of the victims in Clarksville, a predominantly white community, and [defendant’s] purposeful attack against them because of their minority status, justifies the district court’s determination that these victims were uncommonly vulnerable to the defendant’s acts.”); Devon W. Carbado & Patrick Rock, What Exposes African Americans to Police Violence?, 51 HARV. C.R.-C.L. L. REV. 159 (2016).

346. See Obergefell v. Hodges, 135 S. Ct. 2584, 2604 (“Especially against a long history of disapproval of their relationships, this denial to same-sex couples of the right to marry works a grave and continuing harm. The imposition of this disability on gays and lesbians serves to disrespect and subordinate them.”).


348. On prisoners, see, for example, Benning v. Georgia, 391 F.3d 1299, 1312 (11th Cir. 2004) noting that:

If a requested exemption from health or safety rules is so serious as to place members of the prison community at risk, [federal law] allows [the state] to deny the exemption so long as the challenged rule serves a compelling interest, such as prison safety, and the challenged rule is the least restrictive means of serving that interest.


the elderly and the poor have faced long histories of discrimination—often hundreds of years deep—and the attacks on them continue.351

Does my analysis foreclose the possibility of new vulnerable communities, classes, or groups arising over time? No. Disadvantaged classes tend to change over time, meaning that today’s vulnerable could very well be tomorrow’s victimizers. Outrage also has a way of creating new communities of its own. It is adept at bringing people together, often across boundaries of all sorts, and it effortlessly coalesces them into a hive of actors who demand action on behalf of a particular cause. Recall, for example, the discovery of a drowned Syrian toddler on a Turkish beach whose family had fled war or the case of the Zimbabwean lion that was killed by an American dentist both of which cases elicited global uproar.352 The outrage in both cases—one a human rights case and the other an animal rights case—brought together people across the globe who demanded action.353 Outrage thus creates communities, however transitory, that come together in the service of a cause. If those communities were imperiled in some way by the actions of an aggressor, my analysis would embrace the expression of outrage on their behalf, even if the only thing that held them together was their moral outrage for a sliver of time.

Applying this insight about communities and classes to Sheridan and Kansas, it becomes even more evident that Sheridan misdirected its moral outrage and that Kansas was right not to express any outrage. Sheridan identified the state and federal governments as “potential innocent entities” in the case.354 It expressed moral outrage because it held that “[i]n this state, courts will not allow wrongdoers to enrich themselves as a result of their own criminal acts at the expense of an innocent party.”355 That is, the innocent victims in Sheridan were the state and federal governments—neither of which is a community, class, or group that faced a long history of discriminatory animus as a matter of law, public policy, or societal bias either at the moment Sheridan was decided or at the present moment.356 Kansas similarly does not present a community

351. See, e.g., id.
353. If These Images Don’t Change Europe, What Will?, supra note 352.
355. Id.
or constituency historically at threat or under sustained attack, even if does present Kansas as a victim of Nebraska’s willful “misbehavior” for the second time in roughly a decade.357

Similarly, Abercrombie was wrong not to express moral outrage on Ms. Elauf’s behalf. Ms. Elauf was a young Muslim woman who sought employment in a potentially hostile state, her home state, Oklahoma, from an employer indisposed to her.358 Bringing into relief this aspect of Ms. Elauf’s particular horizon and horizon facing her, the trial court observed that “Elauf has, since age 13, worn the head scarf consistently and continuously when in public or in the presence of men who are strangers—this despite the fact that she resides in Tulsa, Oklahoma.”359 Given, therefore, the particular traditions and prejudices to which women and Muslims are still subject in the United States, and especially in Oklahoma, Ms. Elauf would meet the proposed test’s requirement for the expression of moral outrage on her behalf. That is, as a Muslim and a woman, Ms. Elauf is part of a community or class that was historically threatened or at risk, is currently threatened or at risk, and, in her particular case, that is likely to be continuously threatened or at risk.

Indeed, relying on similar reasoning, Sheridan should have expressed moral outrage for Suzanne E. Sheridan. Mrs. Sheridan was a battered woman who lived with an abusive spouse who refused to work.360 Given the existence of sexism and possible misogyny in the case, and the physical nature of the humiliation that Mrs. Sheridan suffered at home, Suzanne E. Sheridan would qualify as being from a community or class historically threatened or at risk, is currently threatened or at risk, and, in her particular case, from her a community or class that is likely to be continuously threatened or at risk.361 Moral outrage should have issued for Suzanne E. Sheridan and women like her, which the Sheridan court failed to do.362

B. Muted or Silenced

Given the fact that outrage speaks loudly (and some might add stridently) in the service of a given cause, an additional requirement for the expression of moral outrage would be that the community or class in question must either have been historically muted or silenced, is currently muted or silenced, or is likely at risk of being muted or

358. EEOC v. Abercrombie & Fitch Stores, Inc., 731 F.3d 1106, 1112 (10th Cir. 2013).
359. Id. at 1278 (emphasis added).
360. Sheridan, 589 A.2d at 1075.
361. See id.
362. See id.
silenced, which explains the need for the court to state a position emphatically on that community’s behalf at this point in time.


C. Emphatic Remedy

Outrage, under my reading, will thus arise as its own remedy, applicable both at law and at equity. While some remedies are classified as monetary (damages, for example) and others as coercive (injunctions, for example), outrage might be classified as its own kind of remedy, an emphatic remedy that both emboldens the grant of all other remedies and that reinforces them as well. Outrage would thus be the remedy behind the remedy (a hermeneutic remedy, as it were), which would enhance the monetary value of a damages award, expand the scope of an injunction, and still leave to the judge’s discretion written expression moral outrage in the *Sheridan* fashion, as well. Take, for example, the award of punitive damages—an outrage remedy—in the *Pion* case.\footnote{Id.} The Supreme Court of Vermont upheld the award of $5,000 against Mr. Pion and $25,000 against Mrs. Pion.\footnote{Pion v. Bean, 833 A.2d 1248 (Vt. 2003).} The court held that actual malice had been found in the case to support such an award and that actual malice required
“[a] showing of conduct manifesting personal ill will or carried out under circumstances evidencing insult or oppression, or even by conduct showing a reckless or wanton disregard of one’s rights’ will suffice.”[368] Under my analysis, the Pions’ sexist/misogynist comments targeting of women in that case would satisfy my “community or class” and the “muted or silenced” requirements. The victims in the Pion case would thus be the kinds of litigants for whom the model proposed here would reinforce the case for an outrage remedy.

Because my test identifies who gets the presumption that an outrage remedy should apply (without establishing that they do merit that remedy under a given set of facts), the litigants claiming an outrage remedy would still have to meet the test for the remedy they seek. In the Pion case, for example, for punitive damages to be issued the plaintiffs would still have to show actual malice to the satisfaction of the trier of fact. [369] Nevertheless, having met actual malice the test for an outrage remedy, the victims in the Pion case could see their punitive and other damages awards enhanced and an expression of moral outrage issue on their behalf.[370]

Such enhancement of a remedy already exists for civil rights violations and hate crimes in American law.[371] The jury could be instructed that once they have found that actual malice has been met (as required under Vermont law for an award of punitive damages, for example) they may (to adapt current language applicable in Vermont) “in determining the amount of punitive damages, consider the defendant’s actions against this particular individual from a community or class at risk in our society. [They] may also consider the fact that by targeting this individual in this manner the defendant has sought to silence the community or class at risk to which this individual belongs, and [they] may increase the size of [their] penalty to a level that [they] deem appropriate under these circumstances.”[372]

368. Id.
369. Id. at 1248–49.
370. Pion, 833 A.2d at 1249.
Such an instruction would take the focus off the defendant, as appears to be currently the case under Vermont law, and would place it where it should be: on the plaintiff’s and her community’s suffering. Given constitutional preferences for punitive damage awards that are not excessive, the jury’s punitive damages award could be reviewed for conformity with constitutional precedent.\textsuperscript{373} A dignitarian turn in our jurisprudence requires of us the upholding of the inherent dignity of vulnerable groups because such groups are pivotal to the kinds of public discourse, conversation, and dialog we would like to thrive in our society and legal system.

CONCLUSION

Far from a request that a court “yell” at a litigant at a given point in time, moral outrage would instead require a court to speak audibly on behalf of a class or community at risk because all other attempts at conversation have failed up to this moment in time. Gadamer’s hermeneutic insights situate all parties to a judicial proceeding in time, and they invite such parties to face and transcend the nefarious effects of their particular traditions and prejudices. Because it pierces the other’s inability to hear or appreciate the suffering of its interlocutor, which suffering she has been trying to bring to the surface of her communicative ability, outrage helps the vulnerable speak beyond the barriers imposed by antagonistic traditions and prejudices. The effect of the outrage remedy would be to make evident the dignity of the vulnerable in both our legal and public discourse by assuring the vulnerable that even at their weakest, their most susceptible—when they might not be able to speak on their own behalf—their judicial system can and will act as their mouthpiece.

The outrage model presented in this Article builds on the existence of moral outrage in our legal system and the Article assumes that moral outrage need not be—and is not—an unruly element of our legal system if conscripted and channeled appropriately. The idea, therefore, is not only to empower vulnerable litigants as they appear before their judicial system after being exposed to long and difficult and painful histories of discrimination, but also to empower judges to do what they already do, but, openly, transparently, and within a remedial framework that serves the ends of social justice. After all, what is a remedy if not the ability to hear someone, to listen to her as she speaks, and in response to agree to the truth that she presents about her community’s continued marginalization whose suffering we are committed to ending?

\textsuperscript{373} Shahi v. Madden, 5 A.3d 869 (Vt. 2010).