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ARTICLE

Coping in an Unjust World: Affective Injustice and Liberatory Coping

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Abstract

This paper explores a dilemma often faced by marginalized groups: how to cope with oppression when doing so necessitates a choice between safeguarding immediate personal well-being and fighting for structural change. While mainstream conceptions of coping take it to be an individual-level phenomenon aimed at maintaining/restoring personal well-being through emotion regulation processes, a recent plea in psychology calls for the "decolonization" of coping, such that collective efforts aimed at liberatory change be construed as genuine instances of coping as well. We provide the first philosophical treatment of "decolonial coping" and assess its merits and drawbacks as compared to mainstream coping. Our focus on *coping* double binds contributes to the philosophical literature on double binds by broadening the range of scenarios that can plausibly be understood as instances of double binds and the normative analysis of the costs associated with each horn of the dilemma and with the double bind itself. We identify the affective injustice of *apt ambivalence,* thereby also addressing for the first time the relation between double binds and affective injustice.

1. Introduction

While the phenomenon of coping has been the subject of considerable psychological research, it has garnered much less attention from philosophers.[1] While philosophers have written much about living in an unjust world, they have yet to do so through the

[1]While philosophers have paid attention to phenomena falling under the umbrella of "coping" (Brison 2002; Bovens 2021) and even explicitly referred to the notion (Christman 2014; Bovens 2021), in-depth philosophical characterizations of coping, especially in relation to agency, have only recently started to be developed: Valmisa (2021) explores the concept from the perspective of Chinese philosophy of action, and Berdini (2023) from a Western action-theoretical framework, while also providing a bridge with the psychological literature.

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lens of coping and its attendant literature.[2] We seek to remedy this by exploring a critical dilemma those in marginalized groups often face: how to cope in response to oppression when doing so necessitates a choice between safeguarding immediate personal well-being and fighting for structural change. In section 2 we characterize this "coping double bind" and introduce examples to illustrate it. In section 3 we introduce what psychologists have recently termed "decolonial coping," which has been proposed as potentially preferable to mainstream (or maintenance) coping, and provide the first philosophical treatment of the concept, which we characterize as "liberatory" coping. We then examine the social, affective, and agentic costs associated with each horn of the double bind, that is, maintenance coping (section 4) and liberatory coping (section 5), respectively, as well as those associated with confronting the double bind itself (section 6). The latter, we argue, involves the underappreciated affective injustice of *apt ambivalence*. We conclude by outlining the distinctive contribution that focusing on *coping* double binds brings to the philosophical literature on double binds—namely, it broadens both the range of scenarios that can plausibly be understood as instances of double binds and the normative analysis of the costs associated with each horn of the dilemma, while also addressing for the first time the relation between double binds and affective injustice.

2. The coping double bind

On April 4, 1977 "blind people, deaf people, wheelchair users, disabled veterans, people with developmental and psychiatric disabilities and many others, all came together" to occupy a number of United States federal buildings across the nation (Grim 2015). Activists were protesting the government's lack of enforcement for Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, which had been signed four years prior. The law prohibited the exclusion of disabled people from an array of federally funded services, programs, and activities. During the 504 sit-in, some buildings were occupied for hours, others for days. As the sit-in progressed, many protesters forwent "things like backup catheters, ventilators, and other equipment that, if they were to fail, could mean life or death" (Heumann 2020, 120). For many, the sit-in was a physically grueling and dangerous experience. However, protesters decided that jeopardizing their well-being in the short term was worth it for the larger fight against ableism.

Tessman (2005) describes this tension between advancing social justice and safeguarding personal welfare as a separation between virtue (in an Aristotelian sense) and the good life:

> a similar unlinking can follow from maintaining character traits that are praiseworthy due to their efficacy for a politics of resistance, but that forfeit their bearer's well-being because they are self-sacrificial or corrosive or crowd out other valuable traits. (Tessman 2005, 5)

[2] An exception is Christman 2014, who however relies on an intuitive notion of coping as the reshaping of one's (practical) identity in the face of unforeseen and uncontrollable circumstances and discusses it in relation to debates on internalized oppression and adaptive preferences. Here, we bridge the philosophical literature on living under conditions of oppression—specifically, the phenomenon of oppressive double binds—with psychological accounts of coping. Doing so allows us to broaden the range of scenarios that can be understood as double binds while attending to the hitherto underexplored relation between double binds and affective injustice.

Tessman explains that to effectively resist racial injustice, many political resisters actively cultivate a great deal of anger toward the oppressor; yet, experiencing high amounts of rage can have deleterious effects on an individual's psychological and physical health, including increasing distress, frequency and intensity of low moods, chronic stress, and risks of cardiovascular disease, heart attack, stroke, and type 2 diabetes, as well as even lowering immunity (Bosch et al. 2003; Tessman 2005; Staicu and Cuțov 2010).

We view the dilemma one is faced with when having to choose between one's own personal well-being and the pursuit of justice as a coping double bind. Double binds occur when all options open to oppressed people subject "the agent to some type of harm and renders her worse off than members of the dominant group" (Khader 2021, 234; cf. also Frye 1983). While members of the dominant group sometimes also face a choice between safeguarding their well-being and the pursuit of justice, there are some key differences. Double binds are unavoidable for oppressed people, regardless of whether they take on an activist role or not. In contrast, individuals from dominant groups are not subjected to these double binds, even those who decide to choose to support social justice causes and take on an activist status. Specifically, they do not bear the costs of the double bind or face the same threats to their well-being caused by systemic oppression and if they decide to comply with oppressive standards or norms their well-being or social status is not affected. Indeed, those in oppressed groups have much more at stake than their more privileged counterparts when it comes to facing both horns of the dilemma. For example, at the Section 504 protests, non-disabled protesters did not have to sacrifice their well-being to the same extent that many of the disabled protesters did; and, furthermore, the results of the protest greatly impacted the lives of those who were disabled and did not pose any potential harm or benefits to those who were not.[3]

Generally speaking, "coping" refers to efforts to diminish the impact that a threatening or harmful situation can have on a person (Carver 2011, 222–23). Coping is an inherently contextual and dynamic process that involves a stressor, the person who is engaged in the coping process, and the environment in which the latter takes place. Coping is a helpful feature of our psychology, and it helps us reduce or eliminate stressors, restore our physiological and neuroendocrine systems to pre-stress levels, and maintain a positive self-image and emotional equilibrium (Taylor 2015, 144). When coping, we begin by assessing a situation as stressful and conclude with the implementation of strategies to overcome it. For example, when we are faced with stressful situations, we often respond by adopting thoughts and behaviors that we hope will help us navigate them. "Coping response" refers to the way one responds to a stressor. Following a standard taxonomy in the psychological literature, we divide coping responses into three different kinds of strategies: emotion-based coping, problem-based coping, and meaning-focused coping.

Imagine that you are coping with the loss of your job. Emotion-based coping is aimed at reducing the negative emotional states elicited by the stressor. In the case of a job loss, you might work through feelings of despair or shame and ask yourself, "What am I feeling right now and why?" We often undertake emotion-based coping strategies individually, but they can also involve others' emotional support. For instance, getting affirmation from a friend or family member that you are not worthless and that everything is going to be alright. Avoiding or distancing yourself from your feelings of

[3]See also the example mentioned later on in this section, which helps highlight the costs borne by Black women while navigating double binds in their ordinary lives, independently of their status as activists and of whether they express or rather mask their negative feelings triggered by oppressive circumstances.

shame and worry also count as emotion-based coping strategies. In short: emotion-based coping is aimed at reducing the negative emotional states elicited by the stressor. Problem-based coping, on the other hand, involves considering and assessing different courses of action in response to the stressor that elicited the emotion (Taylor 2015, 141; Frydenberg 2017, 34). For example, coming up with a list of companies to apply to or going to a networking event is an example of problem-based coping. Finally, meaning-focused coping strategies entail the positive reappraisal of the stressful situation so as to increase psychological well-being (Folkman and Moskowitz 2000, 116). Examples of meaning-focused coping strategies include spirituality and mindfulness practices that help individuals reframe their thoughts and evaluations of the stressful situation. Now that you aren't working, you have more time to spend with family and some time for much-needed rest, for example.

It is important to note that, while different in their approach, all three coping strategies involve emotions, since the restoration of psychological well-being almost always involves overcoming the negative emotion(s) associated with the stressor and/or the pursuit of positive emotional states. Although psychologists have been investigating coping and stress for several decades (Lazarus 1966; Lazarus and Folkman 1984; Folkman 2011), the notion is still underexplored in philosophy. Berdini (2023) has recently provided a first philosophical exploration of coping phenomena and highlights that the aim of coping is not only to maintain or restore one's psychological well-being, but also, and importantly, our agency, which includes carrying out plans and maintaining our sense of who we are and want to be (Berdini 2023, 291). That coping is connected with our agency—that it can be *agential*—also means that we can, and often do, exercise our agency throughout the coping process by intentionally bringing our immediate responses to a stressful situation under some degree of conscious control and awareness (Berdini 2023, 292–93), or by deciding to adopt certain coping strategies rather than others.

Now, all individuals will inevitably face stressors in their lives that they must cope with. These include life changes and challenging situations (both major and minor) that are unavoidable in the unfolding of an ordinary human life. However, in an unjust world, structured by interlocking systems of oppression, some agents will be socially positioned in a manner that aggravates both the frequency and type of stressors that they will face.[4] What it means to cope under such unjust conditions has not yet received philosophical attention. This will be our main focus throughout.

Recall the example above, in the Section 504 sit-in case activists engaged in simultaneous, multiple coping strategies. First, in response to their sense of injustice and desire for equity and dignity they engaged in a problem-based coping strategy by deciding to occupy federal buildings in protest—an act selected to respond to the discrimination they face, and the negative emotions elicited by this discrimination. Then, during the protest itself, one of the protest's key organizers recalled that, "despite the discomfort" activists faced during the sit-in:

> people began to have fun. They raced their wheelchairs in the halls, organized games, played the guitar and sang songs. There was almost no privacy. Everyone was getting dressed and taking care of whatever they needed to do in the middle of everything and they were bonding. (Heumann 2020, 120–21)

[4]What we refer to as "coping in an unjust world" others call "pathogenic coping" (Phillips et al. 2015, Rogers et al. 2012).

While "discomfort and anxiety w[ere] the order of [the protesters'] day to day existence," they found ways to reduce their physical and psychological discomfort—in other words, they coped, using emotion-based and meaning-focused strategies (Grim 2015). And, in this case, the coping seemed to help. By shifting their attention to community, togetherness, and fun, they were able to find some relief amidst a psychologically and physically demanding unjust ordeal.

This disability activism example illustrates how undertaking mixed coping strategies as well as communal or community-based coping might be successful in both psychological and agential terms. Despite the costs to their physical well-being, activists were able to maintain and assert their agency while also pushing for structural change that would allow their agency to be expanded and respected.

Not all coping in the face of oppression involves such positive outcomes for individual agency and the promotion of social justice. For example, as Inger Burnett-Zeigler (2021) explains, "society puts pressure on" Black women "to be everything to everybody—to be superwomen—and we accept the charge" (Burnett-Zeigler 2021, 2). The ongoing work of facing daily oppression and the constant battle to "defy the negative expectations people have of us and to prove our worth" can lead Black women to mask their emotions and hide their true selves from others (2). According to Burnett-Zeigler:

> The mask is our protection from all the historical trauma and societal ills—racism, sexism, victimization—that weigh us down. It tries to keep the outside hurt from getting in and the inside hurt from getting out . . . the mask allows us to show only a fraction of our true selves to the world. *We wear it as a way of coping with our pain.* It's our survival tactic. But is it really serving us? I don't think so. In fact, I believe the strong Black woman mask is preventing us from being our authentic and abundant selves. (Burnett-Zeigler 2021, 3)

Thus, coping via what Burnett-Zeigler (2021) calls the "façade of the strong Black woman" constitutes both an emotion-based coping strategy, involving a great deal of emotional regulation "to deny and suppress" (7) certain emotions and project others—"a way of coping with our pain"—and a problem-focused one, deployed to help the agent navigate an oppressive environment (3).

Burnett-Zeigler's example illustrates that the coping strategies marginalized agents undergo include navigating multiple axes of oppression that act as chronic stressors, which represent both a psychological and physical cost that the agent would not have to pay in a more just social arrangement. Henceforth, we will refer to Burnett-Zeigler's example as *Masks* and the Section 504 protest example as *Disability Activism*. *Disability Activism* and *Masks* both exemplify what we call the "coping double bind," where oppressed agents are faced with the dilemma of having to choose between protecting their personal well-being on the one hand, and procuring structural change to the unjust stressors that plague them, on the other. We see the coping double bind as involving individuals oppressed by systemic oppression who must decide whether to prioritize:[5]

[5]In many cases agents who face a coping double bind might not engage in decision-making to get out of it, but act instead out of habit, without deliberating about what to do. Our focus in this paper is on cases where deliberation is undertaken in the face of a coping double bind and the challenges and harms associated with that process (see section 6). A thorough examination of cases of habitual responses to coping double binds is a topic for future work.

1. The maintenance and restoration of their well-being, on the one hand.
   or
2. To engage in efforts needed to create a more just social arrangement, on the other.

Both *Disability Activism* and *Masks* help bring the morally problematic features of the coping double bind into relief. By staying home from the Section 504 sit-in, disabled protesters would be able to prioritize their well-being by having access to medical supplies and other necessities for maintaining their health. But staying home would also mean not fighting to change the status quo, which involves countless stressors for disabled people living in an ableist world. Likewise, *Masks* highlights the choice many Black women committed to social justice face daily: whether to mask their emotions in order to get through the day without rocking the boat, or to express their anger, sorrow, and frustration in response to the rife trauma and oppression with which they must contend.

While both options that make up the coping double bind may involve the engagement of coping strategies, only the first option constitutes coping as it is conventionally understood. Coping strategies are, by their standard definition, strategies that operate mainly at the individual level to restore and maintain states of well-being by removing/overcoming stressors.[6] This is what is at play in option one of the double bind. We will henceforth refer to this standard conception of coping as "maintenance coping." Pursuing the second option, and seeking structural change, may well involve instances of such coping along the way (as in *Disability Activism* when activists regulated their distress so as to continue their protest), but the option itself does not constitute coping as conventionally understood as it is not primarily concerned with short-term well-being. Recently, however, a plea has been issued in the psychology literature that we decolonize our concept of coping. Phillips and colleagues argue that our mainstream conception of coping must be decolonized as it is currently overly individualistic and focused on the short term, which, they argue, essentially keeps agents complicit or complacent regarding power structures (Phillips et al. 2015). They contend that an adequately decolonized conception of coping would correct this and allow us to understand liberatory struggles as genuine coping strategies. If they are right, then our coping double bind is actually a dilemma between two different types of coping. Their proposal has not yet received philosophical attention, however. We turn to this now.

3. "Decolonial coping"

Phillips et al. (2015) argue that psychological research has focused its attention on coping strategies that prioritize individual well-being in such a way that protects—and ultimately reifies—the oppressive status quo (e.g., if in *Disability Activism* people do not engage in protest, and in *Masks* appropriate negative emotions in response unjust stressors continue to be masked). A focus on short-term accommodation or adaptation to stressful situations and the alleviation of individual-level symptoms/discomfort may result in resignation and lack of social change.

[6]There are a few exceptions to this individualist focus within the psychological literature. The first is the Conservation of Resources Theory (Hobfoll 1989), which emphasizes the importance of social support and resources for the individual's coping process. The second is the notion of *communal* coping, occurring when there is either a shared appraisal of the problem as "our" problem (as opposed to "my" or "your") (Rentscher 2019), or the coping response adopted is cooperative problem-solving (Lyons et al. 1998).

As a counter, Phillips et al. advocate for a focus on "decolonial" coping responses to oppression which contrast mainstream psychological science's atomistic approaches to coping by emphasizing social transformation.

> In contrast to mainstream psychological constructions of coping that emphasize individual adaptation to oppressive realities, a decolonial response to oppression emphasizes social transformation. Rather than elevate the unjust status quo to the level of natural or inevitable, a decolonial response to oppression de-naturalizes the status quo by revealing it to be the project of violent repression and injustice. (2015, 376)

Part of what is novel about Phillips et al.'s (2015) approach is that it expands what we consider to be "coping" to include cases that do not straightforwardly promote short-term emotional well-being, and which focus on more long-term social transformation. This is a novel and important proposal in that it suggests that psychologists (and folk psychology) have been conceptualizing "coping" far too narrowly, and in a manner that risks perpetuating rather than dismantling the status quo. While Phillips et al. (2015) don't give an explicit definition of "decolonial coping," their work suggests that it includes the following three features:

1. Promotes liberation and social transformation: In its most basic sense, decolonial coping is coping that promotes liberation of both oppressed people and those in dominant communities who are compelled to perpetuate oppression.
2. Disrupts epistemologies of ignorance: Decolonial coping also involves disrupting epistemologies which naturalize oppressive social orders and promote ignorance about them.
3. Promotes critical consciousness: Decolonial coping promotes critical consciousness among oppressed persons by encouraging collective identification and access to collective resources that promote liberation and empowerment.

It is important to note that features 2 and 3 are arguably instances of feature 1, as they involve the "promotion of liberation and social transformation" through disruption of epistemologies of ignorance and the promotion of critical consciousness respectively, such that if features 2 or 3 are at play, feature 1 may be implied. This being said, feature 1 is arguably not exhausted by features 2 and 3, as there may be other ways of promoting liberation and social transformation than through features 2 and 3. We read features 2 and 3 as a specification of decolonial coping that centers its collective nature. This is because feature 1 could plausibly be satisfied by individual actions including efforts within one's own family for example (such as trying to convince one's parents of the existence and wrongness of their latent homophobia). It is unclear whether Phillips et al. (2015) would consider this an instance of decolonial coping, even though it seems to disrupt epistemologies of ignorance and promote social transformation, if at a small scale. We believe the collective nature of decolonial coping is key to its definition, such that paradigmatic cases of decolonial coping are not ones such as in the above example, but rather ones that involve collectivization of some sort.

Whether features 2 and 3 are individually sufficient for an instance of coping to count as decolonial depends on whether we read them as necessarily entailing feature 1. For features 2 and 3 not to entail feature number 1, critical consciousness and the disruption

of epistemologies of ignorance would have to be decoupled from the promotion of liberation and social transformation, which seems implausible. Features 2 and 3 then seem to be individually sufficient to make an instance of coping one of decolonial coping. However, since feature 1 seems to be more basic or fundamental to the definition of decolonial coping, as the other two features are arguably instances of it, we take feature 1 to be the only necessary and sufficient condition of decolonial coping. More precisely then, we consider Phillips et al.'s proposal to be the following:

> **Decolonial coping**: coping that promotes liberation and social transformation through collective efforts.

A further question that naturally arises for the philosopher, now that we have a better understanding of the proposal on the table, is whether the phenomenon in question should be called "decolonial coping." We do not take this to be a purely semantic issue, as overusing or misusing terms can empty their meaning, and this is especially worrying in cases where radical or revisionary proposals are being made. We propose that the phenomenon in question be called "liberatory coping" rather than "decolonial coping" for a number of reasons. First, it does not seem to us that anything in the authors' characterization of this novel type of coping is necessarily tied to a decolonial project, neither in theory nor practice. With regard to the theoretical dimension, the concepts of liberation, critical consciousness, and epistemologies of ignorance can be linked to decolonial efforts but need not be. These concepts are however integral to the goal of social justice, which is a broader notion than decolonization. As far as practice is concerned, it seems to us that liberation can be sought in a manner quite independent of decolonial concerns. That is, groups that have not been previously colonized can seek liberation, and the epistemologies of ignorance, and related critical consciousness that must be developed to disrupt them, may not rely on decolonial theories or practices. Lastly, characterizing the novel type of coping as "liberatory" instead of "decolonial" helps characterize our target phenomenon in terms of its broad intended aim, which mirrors the characterization of conventional coping as "maintenance coping," given its aims. Decolonial coping may then be seen as a specific subtype of liberatory coping that occurs in contexts involving historically colonized groups, or in situations where the overturning of specifically colonial epistemologies is critical to the liberatory project. To summarize then, we propose liberatory coping to be the following:

> **Liberatory coping:** coping that promotes liberation and social transformation through collective efforts.

We propose this as the working definition of liberatory coping, where this is meant to capture paradigmatic cases of liberatory coping. We grant that there will be borderline cases where, for example, individual actions and efforts promote social transformation (likely at a small scale). As these cases do not necessarily involve group identification, nor do they involve collective efforts, we take them to either not count as instances of liberatory coping, or at the very least to not count as a paradigmatic case of the target phenomenon. We are therefore proposing a prototype understanding of the concept of liberatory coping that permits graded membership in the set of phenomena to which the concept refers (Rosch 1973). The range of phenomena that count as liberatory coping are those that satisfy the minimal condition of, in some way, promoting liberation and

transformation. There are, however, more prototypical or paradigmatic cases of liberatory coping than others and we take our proposed definition to characterize the prototype or paradigmatic cases of liberatory coping, that is, ones involving *collective* efforts toward liberation and social transformation. Those phenomena that are not collective, but satisfy the minimal condition of promotion of liberation, however subtly, may count as non-standard, or less central cases of liberatory coping on our proposal.[7] So, while the *Disability Activism* scenario is arguably seen as a paradigmatic case of liberatory coping through collective action,[8] according to the prototype theory, a Black woman who decided to *un*mask and express her feelings of anger and frustration and thereby expose the misogynoir permeating her social environment, would, maybe in a less paradigmatic way (given the broad intended aim of structural change), count as liberatory nonetheless.[9]

A prototype theory of this sort also helps us deliver on the intuition that liberatory and maintenance coping are not two entirely mutually exclusive categories. That is, while liberatory coping is paradigmatically collective and focused on long-term social change, maintenance coping is paradigmatically focused on short-term individual well-being, but likely includes less paradigmatic cases where coping is less short-term, or less individualistic. On a prototype theory of these respective concepts then, while paradigmatic cases of each type of coping are very different, the less paradigmatic cases of liberatory and maintenance coping will often overlap, as exemplified by the deployment of maintenance coping strategies during the 504 sit-ins in the *Disability Activism* scenario discussed above. In that context, paradigmatic instances of maintenance coping are subsumed under the broader liberatory end, thereby constituting instances of liberatory coping, although less paradigmatic. Our initial philosophical treatment allows us to fine-tune the definition of liberatory coping and therefore to better theorize its relation to maintenance coping in a manner that respects real-world cases.

With this initial treatment of the concept of liberatory coping on the table then, our coping double bind can be properly understood as a dilemma between whether to pursue (paradigmatic types of) maintenance coping or (paradigmatic types of) liberatory coping when coping in an unjust world.[10] Philosophers and psychologists (including

[7]The same point about more or less paradigmatic cases holds for other features of liberatory coping, such as it being agential/intentional (as the result of decision-making/deliberation, or of a thought-through, intentionally developed habit) or more spontaneous or automatic (as when someone learns a certain liberatory coping practice from similarly situated agents, like in a given group or community, without engaging in much deliberation when deploying it, and subsequently consolidating it into a habit). Purely spontaneous cases might qualify as liberatory coping if the right conditions are met—i.e., the agents are socially positioned as marginalized (vs. belonging to a dominant group) and they eventually come to conceptualize their coping as liberatory or deploy it in a more intentional way.

[8]That collective action is key to tackle structural injustice is an assumption widely shared in social and political philosophy (cf. Young 2011; Isaacs 2011; Zheng 2018; to name a few).

[9]Although some philosophers think anger is counterproductive to the fight for social justice (Nussbaum 2016; Pettigrove 2012), feminist thinkers have argued that this is not the case (Lorde 1984; Cherry 2021; Silva 2021a). Here we follow the latter in assuming that anger can be productive to social causes. The expression of anti-racist anger, or Lordean anger, as Myisha Cherry (2021) points out, can be one of several ways to manage anti-racist anger and cultivate it to help it "perform its role in the anti-racist struggle" (145). As such, expressing and cultivating Lordean rage can be seen as an instance of emotion-based liberatory coping.

[10]We acknowledge that in some cases maintenance coping and liberatory coping might be compatible with one another, and thus agents will not be faced with a dilemma in the way that we have characterized it here. With this in mind, we specify that the cases we consider here are ones in which the specific unjust

Phillips et al. 2015) have suggested that maintenance coping is more often than not going to leave the status quo unchanged. In the next section we look more closely into the mechanisms and processes involved in maintenance coping to understand whether and why this might be the case.

4. The harms of maintenance coping

Here we look at examples of the three maintenance coping strategies (emotion-based, problem-focused, and meaning-focused) to investigate whether and how they keep agents from confronting the unjust status quo. As noted above, all these maintenance coping strategies involve emotion-regulation of some sort. In *Masks*, Black women are engaged in the "emotion-based coping strategy" of emotion suppression—this may involve suppressing/controlling expression or numbing strategies, such as distancing or dissociating from their emotions, in order to wear the "strong Black woman" mask. The harms associated with emotion suppression are far reaching and include a decrease in positive emotional experience (Brans et al. 2013; Gross 1998; Stepper and Strack 1993; Strack et al. 1988), negative cardiovascular impacts (Butler et al. 2003), and impaired cognitive function (Richards and Gross 1999). Thus, along with blocking authenticity, masking is harmful on a psychological and physiological level.

Further, this coping strategy does not let negative emotions have their potential epistemic and practical upshots. In contemporary philosophy of emotion, the view that emotions represent evaluative properties is widespread (Deonna and Teroni 2012; Tappolet 2016), such that emotions are thought to play important epistemic roles in granting us knowledge, often in cases where we would have missed crucial information had we not experienced the emotion (Jaggar 1989; Silva 2021b; Deonna and Teroni 2025). Similarly, emotions are often thought of as inherently motivational, such that they will move us to act in ways that target or manage the objects they are about (Deonna and Teroni 2012). The difficult emotions suppressed in *Masks,* then, have potentially important epistemic and practical value. First, they represent features of the unjust world agents face, and second, they involve motivational elements that might prompt actions aimed at change. By masking the emotions experienced, prospects of changing the status quo, through important epistemic changes and actions, are plausibly hindered. Engaging the emotion-regulation strategy of suppression then may not only keep agents from engaging in fights for a more just world but may also actually worsen the status quo by limiting oppressed groups' capacities for authentic self-expression and decreasing their mental and physical health.

The second type of maintenance coping strategy was problem-based coping, which involves considering and assessing different courses of action in response to the stressor. This may involve numerous courses of action, but perhaps the most straightforward way of dealing with a stressor is to avoid it. This is often called situation management (Archer and Mills 2019), which involves avoiding or removing oneself from situations that trigger negative emotions. This can be seen as an indirect type of emotion-regulation process as we seek to manage our emotions by avoiding having certain

circumstances necessitating coping are such that short-term individual well-being and long-term collective well-being are either in opposition with each other, or more difficult to reconcile. In these cases, a paradigmatic instance of coping of one type is therefore at the greatest possible distance from the paradigmatic instance of the other; and pursuing one type of coping over the other is such that the agent faces the harm(s) associated with a double bind (cf. definition in section 2).

emotions triggered altogether (as opposed to, as in emotion suppression, acting directly on the emotion to control/suppress it). Although it would be impossible to avoid all ableist injustices given their structural nature, those in *Disability Activism* faced the specific dilemma of whether to go and protest or stay home. The clear negative consequence of staying home and favoring maintenance coping is that in doing so one would turn away from changing the underlying stressor that caused their need to emotionally regulate in the first place. Managing one's situation to avoid negative emotions then, while a valid problem-based coping strategy, does often seem to straightforwardly lead to disengagement with injustice.[11]

Lastly, maintenance meaning-focused coping strategies seek to change the meaning of the stressor so that it doesn't trigger such negative emotions. There are two emotion-regulation processes that constitute meaning-focused coping strategies: attentional deployment and cognitive reappraisal (Archer and Mills 2019). Attentional deployment involves paying attention to some features of one's environment as opposed to others, to essentially avoid stimuli that trigger negative emotions without actually removing oneself from the relevant situations. For example, by focusing on the positive features of their sit-in (such as being with other like-minded individuals), disability activists were able to regulate their fear, anxiety, and distress and engage in play and community building.[12] Not all cases of attentional deployment will prove beneficial however, as avoiding the negative aspects of stimuli and situations can lead us to disengage with, and indeed avoid, some of the political work that needs to be done to promote justice. For example, if one chooses not to attend to a racist and sexist comment made by a colleague, focusing instead on them being a well-intentioned person, we may lose sight of the pervasiveness of these forms of oppression.[13] In *Masks*, a fair amount of attentional deployment may be engaged to avoid attending to the most problematic features of misogynoir. Cognitive reappraisal, on the other hand, involves focusing on positive aspects of a stimulus so as to have a less negative evaluation of it. In this case, attention is not turned to other aspects of one's environment, instead, the agent attends to the stimulus itself and gives it a different interpretation. For example, in the case of a sexist remark, one may, after feeling uncomfortable and angry about it initially, reevaluate the remark as merely a joke, or even as a potentially flattering one. Similarly to attentional deployment, through cognitive reappraisal one risks leaving the status quo unchallenged and one may even become complicit in perpetuating it. Meaning-focused coping strategies then, in attempting to change the meaning of problematic situations and events, foster disengagement with, as well as obfuscation of, the injustices faced.

[11]We are not claiming, here, that people who are victims of oppression and injustice should be responsible for engaging with and redressing the oppressive/unjust status quo. It is, however, often the case that much social justice work is taken on by people directly affected by injustice. This is a descriptive, not normative, claim. Normative evaluations regarding the allocation of responsibilities to redress oppression and injustice exceed the scope of the present paper—here we are concerned with diagnosing the moral costs associated with having to face a coping double bind.

[12]As noted in section 2, there are emotion-regulation strategies at play in most instances of other kinds of coping. Similarly, we acknowledge that there might be aspects of problem-focused coping at play in this example as well. However, we see the shift that activists were able to make from a straining and stressful situation to a playful and community-building one, via attentional deployment, as primarily an instance of meaning-focused coping.

[13]For an analysis of the epistemic and emotional harms that even "allies" can, often unintentionally, visit on trans people, see Ivy/McKinnon 2017.

By avoiding triggering situations, suppressing negative emotions that arise, and attending to positive features so as to reinterpret triggers as unproblematic, paradigmatic emotion-regulation strategies involved in maintenance coping with an unjust world will, more often than not, leave the status quo unchanged, and often risk entrenching it. This represents not only a moral harm to society at large, in that practical and hermeneutical resources crucial to promoting a more just world are made unavailable, but also a harm to the agency of coping agents themselves, as the choice to opt for the preservation or restoration of individual well-being compromises the agents' capacities to engage in fights for social justice that they may be committed to.

Further, these agents may face a distinctively affective injustice. Philosophers have recently begun to explore the harms suffered by oppressed agents specifically in their capacity as emotional beings (Lorde 1984; Whitney 2018; Srinivasan 2018; Archer and Mills 2019; Gallegos 2022; Pismenny et al. 2024). These distinctively *affective* or emotional injustices include a number of different phenomena, and the domain of affective injustice has only recently begun to be mapped. Here, we do not propose a unifying account of affective injustice, nor do we canvas all types that have been proposed, but take them to constitute harms that affect individuals in their capacity as emotional beings and that *disproportionately* and *unjustifiably* impact certain social groups over others. For our purposes here, we are most interested in the type of affective injustice outlined by Archer and Mills (2019), where the disproportionate burden on oppressed agents to regulate apt emotions constitutes an affective injustice. It is important to stress that the emotions oppressed agents typically regulate, if they want to preserve their short-term well-being, are ones that are, more often than not, apt. That is, there are normative reasons that justify these emotional responses. Coping in an unjust world, for marginalized groups, will involve encountering and confronting countless stressors (daily injustices, slights, barriers, comments, and prejudices) that count as normative reasons for a range of negative emotions. When oppressed agents cope with these stressors by deploying the maintenance coping strategies canvassed above, they are in effect regulating apt emotions. When this disproportionately and unjustifiably affects some groups rather than others, it constitutes an affective injustice (Silva 2022). This injustice is problematic not just for consequentialist reasons such as those given above (that these emotion-regulation processes have practical, epistemic, physical, and psychological costs) but also arguably intrinsically, for there may be intrinsic value to responding aptly to reasons for one's emotions (Srinivasan 2018). Indeed, it is arguably an achievement, a good in itself, to respond to normative reasons for emotions (Gallegos 2022). Pursuing the maintenance coping option of the coping double bind then seems to threaten this intrinsic good, by regulating away negative emotions, as well as diminishing the prospects of changing the status quo.

To sum up, by zooming into the emotion-regulation processes involved in the three main types of maintenance coping, we have seen that maintenance coping does not further, and may undermine, efforts to change the oppressive status quo. We propose that this involves (at least) three types of moral harm: (a) a harm at the societal level, in that the fight for social justice is hindered, (b) a harm to the agency of individuals that are blocked from engaging in social justice fights important to them, and (c) an affective injustice in the disproportionate burden put on oppressed agents to regulate their apt emotions.

Will pursuing liberatory coping instead prove better in these regards?

5. The perils of liberatory coping

If maintenance coping can lead to the harms discussed above, ought one opt for liberatory coping instead? One might think so. The thought is that, unlike maintenance coping, which prioritizes individual well-being and typically involves individualistic attempts to avoid, suppress, or mitigate negative emotional experiences, liberatory coping aims at fighting against the status quo and contributing to social transformation by confronting the negative emotions that invariably occur in response to injustice and collectivizing agency/action in response to their triggers. This view is predicated on a close relationship between emotional suffering and coping effectively with oppression. We take this to involve a widespread claim in the philosophy of emotion literature, that is, the proposal, mentioned in the previous section, of a strong connection between emotions and the apprehension of evaluative properties (Deonna and Teroni 2012; Tappolet 2016; Silva 2021b). Apprehending the reality of oppression will, naturally, although perhaps not necessarily, involve a variety of apt negative emotional responses. We highlighted above that maintenance coping under conditions of oppression involves a number of moral costs (at the societal, agentic, and affective levels). While we might think that pursuing liberatory coping allows individuals to avoid some of these harms, it would be too quick to think that in doing so one avoids all harms. Let's look at them in turn.

First, we suggested that it is a moral harm that the fight for social justice is hindered when agents prioritize maintenance coping strategies. While this specific moral harm may be avoided when agents pursue liberatory coping strategies instead, the personal sacrifice that is often involved in doing so plausibly constitutes a moral harm in its own right. If a Black woman decides to "unmask" her emotions and engage in liberatory coping (e.g. expressing frustration, resentment, and fear about misogynoir in her workplace and joining an anti-bias task force; voicing sorrow and despair about her children's unequal access to a quality education at a PTA meeting; or joining a Black Lives Matter protest), she not only increases her workload, but also risks being viewed as a "trouble maker," as well as risking her personal safety. In pursuing liberatory coping, agents are virtuous in a manner that Tessman calls "burdened," as they take on costs that are counterproductive to their personal well-being and flourishing (Tessman 2005). Therefore, while the specific moral harm of leaving the status quo unchanged is avoided if agents opt for liberatory coping, this option comes with moral harms of its own in the form of overly demanding self-sacrifice that falls disproportionately on oppressed groups.

This helps us outline the agentic costs of pursuing liberatory coping. Above we highlighted that pursuing maintenance coping would involve a harm to the agency of those committed to social justice fights, as these coping strategies will often cause one to disengage from, perpetuate, or worsen the status quo. While this specific cost to agency is avoided in pursuing liberatory coping instead, this option involves other significant costs to agency that should not be ignored. Most importantly perhaps, is that the time and energy one would have devoted to one's own talents, life projects, and other interests is hijacked in favor of pursuing time- and energy-consuming structural change. Who one is, or can become, is limited for each individual, and choosing to cope in a liberatory manner (even if the goal of these efforts is to expand the future agentic possibilities of currently oppressed agents) will often hinder other aspects of one's life plans and flourishing.

Lastly, we saw that maintenance coping harms agents specifically in their capacity as emoters or emotional beings. This was straightforwardly the case with maintenance coping where choosing this option burdened oppressed agents disproportionately with having to regulate apt emotions. We might think that liberatory coping, in virtue of its recommendation against regulating away these apt negative emotions, avoids these distinctively affective harms, but this would be too quick. While pursuing liberatory coping might allow individuals to avoid having to down-regulate apt anger, it would likely involve having to regulate other apt emotions such as fear, as activism often involves the danger of retaliation from citizens as well as law enforcement. Further, while pursuing liberatory coping would allow individuals to avoid suppressing other apt negative emotions such as anxiety and sorrow, chronic or frequent levels of these emotions threaten their well-being and may predispose agents to develop a number of health problems (Heim and Nemeroff 2001; Chetty et al. 2014). At the very least it is an open empirical question whether agents are better off, from an individual perspective, engaging in liberatory struggles, such that a number of negatives are envisionable. A case could also be made that oppressed individuals have historically been, and often still are, disproportionately burdened with the emotional regulation of negative emotions associated with liberatory coping and activism than their non-oppressed counterparts. Liberatory coping too, then, could be seen as posing a higher risk for greater harm, personally and societally, to individuals in the oppressed groups. In sum, much like maintenance coping involves emotion-regulation processes that hinder the fight for social change, liberatory coping involves emotion-regulation strategies (and lack thereof) that affect oppressed groups at (a) the societal, (b) agentic, and (c) affective levels.

Finally, let us go back to the normative question outlined above, that is, how should those who are oppressed navigate the double binds that often occur when coping in an unjust world? Our discussion of the perils of liberatory coping helps illuminate that advocating in favor of one type of coping (maintenance vs liberatory) over another might be misguided as both come with their own costs. The carving out of the concept of liberatory coping is a welcome contribution and while we do not deny the power and importance of liberatory coping, we are hesitant to recommend it over maintenance coping given its potential moral harms at the societal, agentic, and affective levels. One option that seems plausible to us is to view liberatory coping as a supererogatory duty rather than a moral requirement.

6. Facing the coping double bind

In the last two sections we highlighted some of the harms associated with maintenance and liberatory coping. In doing so, we hope to have strengthened support for the idea that this double bind is a true moral dilemma for those that face it.[14] In this section we

[14]Navigating the coping double bind and determining how to act in dilemmas created by oppressive social circumstances exemplifies what Webster (2021) describes as "negotiating between different social features . . . by considering them, feeling conflicted by them, endorsing some, and rejecting others, as well as feeling ambivalent about some" (118–19). Webster (2021) argues that this process represents "a kind of reasons-responsiveness where one is responding to social reasons," and that this type of negotiation constitutes a form of "socially embedded agency" (119). We endorse the idea that navigating the coping double bind requires the exercise of this kind of agency and appreciate Webster's broader point that it is important to recognize the agency of those in oppressed groups.

highlight some of the moral harms associated with encountering this double bind in its own right, that is, harms that are distinct from the harms associated with maintenance and liberatory coping respectively. The very fact that oppressed people are faced with a dilemma and need to navigate the decision-making process associated with it (before taking on either of the horns) constitutes an injustice. This is not just because oppressed agents are routinely and disproportionately faced with coping double binds, but also because facing such dilemmas comes with distinct moral harms. Among the moral harms of facing a coping double bind, there are at least three kinds.

6.1. Self-respect

The coping double bind is a threat to the self-respect of marginalized individuals. There are many different ways to understand "self respect," but here we are concerned with the threat posed by the coping double bind to self-"appraisal" or "evaluative self-respect" (Darwall 1977; Dillon 1992). This type of self-respect involves the assessment of whether one has lived up to the standards one has cultivated for one's own self-ideal. This can involve normative commitments and values one believes represent a morally strong character (Dillon 1992). If a person feels as though they have lived congruently with their self-ideal, they will have a robust sense of self-respect because they will appraise their conduct as meeting their moral standards. In cases where one judges that their normative commitments and values have not been met, a person's sense of evaluative self-respect will decrease accordingly. Most want to live a life in which they can pursue safety and comfort for themselves as well as be treated as an individual with full personhood, along with others from their identity or social group.[15] Because facing the coping double bind, as a whole, presents a choice between these self-ideals, it represents a challenge to self-respect from the outset. The very act of deciding how to navigate the coping double bind can be understood as a decision about what parts of one's self-respect an agent wants to keep intact and which ones they are willing to forgo.

Of course, in some cases the relative loss of self-respect won't be that extreme. For example, the decision to keep quiet about one colleague's misogynistic comment might not be a big deal in the grander scheme of a woman's life and all of the ways she has resisted gender oppression and thus lived up to her normative commitments to gender equality and the fight for dignity as a woman. In these cases, self-respect might be threatened, yet minimally so. However, in many cases, oppressed people repeatedly make these one-off "low-stakes" decisions to pursue well-being over social justice, in the moment, and the cumulative toll of, say, staying silent at the office, could constitute a more substantive threat to self-respect. On the other hand, there are some cases where just one instance of facing the coping double bind might have significant ramifications for a person's sense of self-respect. Take the dilemma between coming out to one's

[15]In some cases, oppressed people may become unconcerned about the injustices they experience because exposure to oppressive norms conditions them to see themselves as less deserving of dignity or full personhood. In these cases, evaluative self-respect is not at risk because the individual does not have normative commitments aimed at challenging the unjust social order which they have come to view as unproblematic. Many philosophers have discussed the phenomenon of individuals internalizing oppressive norms and the truncating effect this might have on their autonomy and self-regarding attitudes (Benson 1991; Khader 2011; Stoljar 2014). However, these cases fall outside the scope of our analysis, because the coping double bind does not affect individuals who do not feel the pull of the liberatory coping horn of the dilemma. Our focus is on the experiences of those who are affected by the coping double bind because they feel committed, at least to some extent, to creating a more just social arrangement.

unaccepting family as LGBTQ+ or staying quiet to safeguard familial ties. For many, facing just this one coping double bind can have significant, life-altering impacts on one's sense of evaluative self-respect.[16]

6.2. Alienation

In addition to putting evaluative self-respect at risk, the coping double bind, as a whole, also asks those who are oppressed to make a difficult decision: one where they must choose to prioritize their own well-being or advocate for the recognition-respect and rights of themselves, those in their group, and of their group as a whole. Of course, this is part of what constitutes the double bind in the first place, but what we want to call attention to here is that this decision, for many, can be alienating (cf. Christman 2014).

As we have elaborated on earlier, pursuing either horn of the dilemma can result in specific harms to individuals and alienation is one of the psychological and moral harms that might ensue while navigating coping double binds. To opt to pursue maintenance coping over liberatory coping can come with the price of feeling separated from one's identity group and related political causes. In some cases, engaging in maintenance coping might even make you feel distant from the normative commitments and values regarding the social equality of your identity group; and this distancing can result in a sense of powerlessness. Similarly, to engage in liberatory coping can put one at odds with the self as embodied and as in need of material, psychological, and physical well-being. To decide to step into a protest where police have batons raised or to speak up when one's boss says something sexist, thus risking one's job or status, can make a person feel fragmented and at odds with their embodied self. In this way, both horns of the coping double bind are potentially alienating.

Furthermore, we believe that the double bind is, in itself, harmful due to the fact that it pressures a person to play an active role in their own alienation. Part of the nature of double binds, in general, is that one cannot avoid them. In the case of the coping double bind, each horn risks alienation. Thus, when faced with the dilemma, a person is pressured to engage in their own alienation, and they cannot escape this pressure. What's more, the risks for alienation here are not due to one's subjective set of preferences or autonomous choices but the result of systemic injustice that leads to coping double binds. It is this inevitability of risking alienation that makes the coping double bind harmful in itself.

6.3. Affective injustice

Above we argued that both maintenance coping and liberatory coping in response to injustice involve affective injustices because, in both cases, oppressed individuals are burdened with having to regulate apt emotions. It is crucial to note however that facing the coping double bind, in and of itself, can also harm oppressed individuals in their capacity as affective beings. In fact, we believe that facing the coping double bind itself

[16]Our claim here is not that facing the double bind makes self-respect impossible or that it completely strips a person of their sense of self-respect. It is important to note that those who are oppressed will in fact possess "recognition self-respect" or the view of the self as a person with fundamental moral worth (Dillon 1992). This commitment to oneself as a moral agent, or as someone who has a duty to live up to and be treated according to normative standards, renders the choice between maintenance and liberatory coping a crisis for *evaluative* self-respect.

involves an affective injustice of a different type than that involved in maintenance and liberatory coping. Facing the coping double bind engenders what we term the *affective injustice of apt ambivalence*. We derive the concept of "apt ambivalence" from Srinivasan's (2018) analysis of *affective injustice*, extending her initial insight to a wider range of injustices than originally delineated in her account. For Srinivasan (2018), affective injustice occurs when oppressed individuals face the "substantive and psychically costly normative conflict" of choosing between protecting one's prudential well-being or expressing apt yet prudentially counterproductive emotions which arise in response to the moral violations inherent oppressive and unjust social arrangements (134). We agree that oppressed individuals are wronged in their capacity as affective beings by experiencing the emotional toll of double binds, and we see this wrongness extending beyond instances of double binds that center around choices of emotional expression. Specifically, we argue that the *affective injustice of apt ambivalence* occurs when an agent faces:

1. Opposing and incommensurable evaluative considerations;
2. These considerations lead the agent to experience apt ambivalence about which course(s) of action to pursue.
3. The scenarios that lead to this ambivalence are disproportionately experienced by those in oppressed groups.

Unlike Srinivasan's focus on cases of counterproductive, yet apt, cases of anger, this formulation of *apt ambivalence* allows her insight that there is something affectively unjust about double binds to extend to cases where the apt emotions experienced might not be counterproductive. For instance, consider someone in *Disability Activism* choosing to either stay at home (maintenance coping) or sit-in at a government building (liberatory coping). This person might feel a range of emotions (pride, self-righteousness, self-respect) all of which are apt and yet none of which are counterproductive to their well-being or to their ability to engage in liberatory or maintenance coping. Nonetheless, their ambivalence about what to do might be burdensome, conflicted, and rife with doubt and apprehension for good reason. How can one tally up the value of group/community belonging against the value of individual well-being and professional achievement? How can one compare the value of fighting for a better world against the value of protecting one's own personal safety and that of one's family? We take it that when faced with the coping double bind agents are faced with a complex set of at least opposing, and often, incommensurable, evaluative considerations that justify states of emotional ambivalence (even in the absence of "counterproductive emotions"). When these states of apt emotional ambivalence are disproportionately and unjustifiably experienced by some groups rather than others, they constitute an affective injustice.

Oppressed groups will not only be disproportionately burdened with states of apt ambivalence in response to the double bind, as compared to dominant groups, but the frequency of these ambivalent states is likely to be worryingly high. This is because, for many, the coping double bind occurs often and even multiple times a day. In *Masks* for example, the choice between masking or expressing one's emotions may strike first thing in the morning when deciding how to present oneself at work (whether to straighten one's hair or risk looks and comments), on one's way to work (whether to respond to a sexist comment), at work (when someone assumes you are a secretary or when your request to leave early on account of care duties is denied), after work (when supporting a

neighbor or friend even though you are exhausted), in the evening (when deciding whether to attend a BLM protest or rest over the weekend).

In addition to the frequency of this apt ambivalence, its psychic and emotional toll should not be underestimated. First, facing the coping double bind alters emotional experience, focus, and cognitive resources to navigate the coping bind. This reorienting pulls attention from relationships, projects, and endeavors that are both central and valuable to one's ability to thrive. Second, in addition to distracting people from the emotional and cognitive experience they had prior to encountering the coping double bind, the apt ambivalence triggered by the coping double bind often involves emotions that are challenging and difficult to experience, including second-order emotions of frustration and anxiety due to being in a state of apt ambivalence and often indecision. Thus, facing the coping double bind presents a number of emotional burdens that crop up before even embarking on either horn of the dilemma. And, of course, the sheer volume of coping double binds that many oppressed individuals face only adds to the steepness of this emotional tax.

6.4. Coping double binds

Before concluding the paper, it is worth ending this section by outlining what exactly focusing on the coping double bind adds to the existing theories of double binds. This paper extends the existing discourse on the oppressive double bind by rearticulating it through the lens of coping. Building on Frye's (1983) insight that double binds are both the result of oppression and contribute to it, Hirji's (2021) central aim is to elucidate the defining features of oppressive double binds. She contends that what makes double binds distinctive is that, regardless of which horn an individual chooses, their decision ultimately serves to reinforce their own oppression, albeit through different mechanisms. While we agree with Hirji, our aim is not to pinpoint a central, defining feature, but rather to reconceptualize the double bind through the lens of coping and examine its costs. This reconceptualization enables engagement with the extensive psychological literature on coping, thereby facilitating a nuanced analysis of the costs associated with different coping strategies in relation to each horn of the dilemma. We conceptualize the dilemma as a decision faced by oppressed individuals—namely, the tension between prioritizing their immediate well-being and undertaking actions aimed at fostering a more equitable social order. Reconceptualizing the first horn of the double bind in terms of well-being allows for a reframing that emphasizes how individuals are likely to experience such dilemmas in practice, particularly those who may not consciously interpret their choices through the lens of oppressive norms, but who are acutely aware of tangible consequences such as the potential loss of social standing, employment, personal safety, and even adverse health effects. This rearticulation also broadens the range of scenarios that can plausibly be understood as instances of double binds.

In terms of moral harms, Hirji (2021) contends that oppressive double binds pose a significant threat to the *agency* of those who confront them. Specifically, such binds compel agents to choose among options that each, in their own way, undermine the agent's core aims or pursuits. As Hirji puts it, double binds are "cases in which whatever good an agent aims to realize in their choice is, to some degree, undermined. Furthermore, the goods at stake—their own prudential good and their resistance to oppression—are objective interests" (665). We endorse and extend this account by showing how agency is compromised through both maintenance and liberatory coping strategies. In line with Hirji's analysis, our discussion underscores how, in each instance,

individuals' fundamental aims—namely, the pursuit of well-being and the advancement of social justice—are constrained by the double bind. Khader (2021) examines the detrimental effects of oppressive double binds on *self-respect*, with particular emphasis on *recognition* self-respect—defined as "the type of self-respect associated with seeing oneself as equal to others" (233). Building on this insight, we offer, for the first time, a preliminary account of how double binds may also adversely affect *evaluative* self-respect—the kind of self-respect that involves the assessment of whether one has lived up to the standards they have cultivated for their own self-ideal. While, according to Khader (2021), oppressed individuals do not have a duty to comply nor a duty to resist oppressive norms, they do have a self-regarding duty to develop counterhegemonic normative perspectives. In contrast, we pointed out that there are different costs associated with each horn and our analysis of liberatory coping concluded that it should be considered a supererogatory duty rather than a moral requirement.

Finally, the relationship between double binds and affective injustice has to date remained unaddressed. This paper aims to initiate that conversation in two key ways. First, we examine how affective injustice, as conceptualized in existing literature, can emerge in the context of both maintenance and liberatory coping strategies. Second, we expand on Srinivasan's (2018) analysis of affective injustice beyond instances of double binds that center around choices of emotional expression, and to cases where no "counterproductive emotions" are at play by suggesting the more expansive concept of *apt ambivalence*. This form of affective injustice arises under three conditions: when an individual experiences (1) opposing and incommensurable evaluative considerations and (2) these considerations lead the agent to experience apt ambivalence about which course(s) of action to pursue, and when (3) the scenarios that lead to this ambivalence are disproportionately experienced by those in oppressed groups. While we offer only a preliminary introduction of this concept, we hope that others will expand on it and take it up as a valuable addition to the affective injustice literature.

7. Conclusion

In this paper we have focused on coping, a phenomenon that has received surprisingly little philosophical attention. Specifically, we addressed coping under conditions of oppression, which has received even less philosophical attention, and the phenomenon of the "coping double bind" routinely faced by people belonging to oppressed groups. Drawing on a recent proposal in the psychology literature to "decolonize" our concept of coping to include not only maintenance coping aimed at short-term individual well-being but also collective liberatory efforts directed towards transformative social change, we characterized the coping double bind as a dilemma between pursuing two types of coping. In doing so we provided the first philosophical treatment of this novel proposal of "decolonial" coping and proposed a more fine-tuned characterization of this phenomenon which involved offering reasons to drop the term "decolonial" in favor of "liberatory." Next, we characterized the harms involved in each of the horns of the coping double bind. We argued that given the various costs associated with each horn of the coping double bind, neither option can be morally recommended and that facing the coping double bind, in and of itself, involves a number of further harms that are distinct from those involved in pursuing either horn of the coping double bind, including the affective injustice of *apt ambivalence*. Finally, we outlined the distinctive contribution that focusing on *coping* double binds brings to the philosophical literature on double binds—namely, it broadens both the range of scenarios that can plausibly be understood

as instances of double binds and the normative analysis of the costs associated with each horn of the dilemma, while also addressing the relation between double binds and affective injustice.

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