

No Art on a Dead Planet: Political Iconoclasm as Climate Activism

ALICE MADELEINE HILDER JARVIS 

ABSTRACT *A trend has recently emerged among climate activists of attacking artworks as a means of registering protest. I analyse this mode of protest, which I term political iconoclasm, and offer a novel partial defence of political iconoclasm as a protest strategy for environmental activists. I focus on Just Stop Oil's attack on van Gogh's *Sunflowers*. I argue that climate activists' art-attacking protests differ significantly from other recent art-attacking protests: climate protestors generally target non-commemorative, morally innocent artworks, and usually do not seek to destroy the artworks they attack. I argue that iconoclastic protests have been unusually good at capturing attention. Moreover, iconoclasm can enable protestors to communicate with their audience in an unusually direct and compelling way. I address some worries about political iconoclasm, and evaluate it against two theories of permissible protest: one on which disobedience must be civil, and another on which disobedience must meet standards of proportionality and necessity, adapted from the ethics of self-defence and war. I argue that iconoclasm may be permissible on either theory. Iconoclasm is most likely to be permissible when used sparingly, when the artwork attacked has relevant representational content, and when the iconoclastic act transforms the artwork into a protest symbol.*

1. Introduction

On 14th October 2022, two British climate activists hurled a can of Heinz tomato soup at van Gogh's *Sunflowers*. Two weeks later, Italian climate activists threw pea soup over van Gogh's *Sower at Sunset*. Shortly thereafter, Austrian climate activists splashed black paint over Klimt's *Life and Death*. A trend of attacking artworks swiftly took hold among climate protestors. A year after the *Sunflowers* attack, Just Stop Oil activists smashed the glass protecting Velázquez's *Rokeby Venus* – a painting which has seen more than its fair share of iconoclastic protest. More than a century earlier, Suffragette Mary Richardson took a meat cleaver to the *Venus*, slicing it seven times. Political iconoclasm has been around for a long time – and it's not going anywhere.

In this article, I explore attacks on artworks as a mode of climate protest. I focus primarily on the soup-throwing attack on van Gogh's *Sunflowers*. I argue that the *Sunflowers* attack was justified, and provide a partial defence of iconoclasm as a political protest strategy for environmental activists.

The term 'iconoclasm' comes from the Greek *eikōn* ('image') and *kláo* ('to break'). I use the term 'political iconoclasm' to refer to the destruction, damaging, and defacement of artworks as a means of registering political protest. In my usage, the term 'iconoclasm' picks out a wider range of aesthetic interventions compared to its more traditional usage, in which it refers specifically to *destruction* of images. In this context, I favour the expansion

because many recent art-attacking protestors inflicted no lasting damage, but nonetheless relied for the success of their strategy on *appearing* to damage artwork (as I later explore).¹

During the 2020 Black Lives Matter protests, activists around the world graffitied and toppled public statues commemorating Confederates, colonialists, and slave-owners. This spurred philosophical interest in attacks on artworks commemorating morally contentious figures.² Comparatively little philosophical attention has been paid to the iconoclastic protests associated with climate activism groups like Just Stop Oil. Their protests differ in important ways from many of the iconoclastic protests that preceded them: they predominantly target non-commemorative artworks, and rarely consider the artworks they target to be morally objectionable.³

This new wave of iconoclastic protest deserves philosophical attention for several reasons. Iconoclastic climate protests have been much discussed (and widely condemned) in popular media.⁴ They extend a rich history of iconoclastic attacks on morally innocent artworks, notably including the Suffragettes' months-long campaign targeting artworks in public galleries.⁵ They keep happening: by February 2024, climate protestors had staged 38 art-attacking protests in museums.⁶ Finally, political iconoclasm is spreading beyond the climate movement, gaining popularity among activists espousing diverse political causes.⁷ It is therefore worth investigating whether (or when) the iconoclastic attacks recently undertaken by climate protestors might be morally permissible, or even politically desirable.

In Sections 2 and 3, I explore why artworks stand out to protestors as valuable targets. Political iconoclasm has several distinctive features that make it an unusually promising protest strategy. Iconoclasm grabs attention; it is highly disruptive and goes straight to the headlines. Iconoclasm also permits unusually direct visual communication; by attacking the right artworks in the right ways, protestors create powerful symbols of injustice, promoting vivid imaginative engagement with their cause. In Section 4, I address the distinctive risks and controversies of iconoclasm, and consider how they could be mitigated. In Sections 5 and 6, I evaluate iconoclasm against two background theories of permissible protest – one on which disobedience must be civil, and one on which disobedience must meet standards of proportionality and necessity, adapted from self-defence and war. I argue that iconoclasm can be permissible under either theory. I conclude that iconoclasm is, in some contexts, a promising but under-theorised political protest strategy, whose merits have been overlooked.

2. Attention

Protestors face a dilemma. Protest too subtly, and one will be ignored. Protest too disruptively, and one will be condemned. Effective protest inhabits a Goldilocks zone: interesting enough to garner public attention,⁸ but not so controversial as to anger the public, ultimately eroding sympathy for one's cause.

When climate protestors attacked the *Sunflowers*, people paid attention. Damaging the artwork (or rather, appearing to do so) was deeply shocking. The press paid attention, too. Footage was publicised internationally, including by media outlets that rarely address the climate crisis.⁹

In grabbing public attention, iconoclasts avoided one prong of the dilemma, but they seemed to succumb to the other prong. The attention they received, particularly in

mainstream media, was overwhelmingly condemnatory: commentators focused on criticising their tactics, frequently speculating that iconoclastic protest does more harm than good to the environmental movement by attracting the wrong kind of attention.¹⁰ Perhaps attention is beneficial only when accompanied by a favourable appraisal of protestors' actions. If so, iconoclasm seems deeply misguided.

Faced with this worry, note that attention is valuable not for its own sake, but as a pre-requisite for communication. Communication involves commanding and directing the attention of an audience:¹¹ to communicate something to someone, you must first attract their attention, then direct their attention towards the subject about which you want to communicate.¹² In an overcrowded attention economy, the first step is a major stumbling block: most protests are simply ignored.¹³

To understand why (and when) *communication* matters, it helps to distinguish *direct* from *indirect* disobedience. In direct disobedience, protestors break a law they oppose. In indirect disobedience, protestors break an uncontested law, to express opposition to something else. Indirect disobedience does not itself alleviate injustice. To do so, indirect protestors must communicate to their audience that there is an injustice, and that it should be fixed. Communication is essential to the success of the protest strategy.¹⁴ Iconoclastic climate protests constitute *indirect* disobedience. Consequently, communication is vital.

Once environmentalist iconoclasts have attracted attention, can they use it to communicate about their cause? In the immediate aftermath of iconoclastic attacks, protestors certainly capitalise on press attention to communicate about the climate. After throwing mashed potato over Monet's *Les Meules*, Letzte Generation protestors shouted: 'People are starving, people are freezing, people are dying. We are in a climate catastrophe ... in 2050, we'll no longer be able to feed our families'.¹⁵ Media coverage of the protest included footage of protestors' speech, with subtitles and transcripts providing translation. Because they chose such an attention-grabbing protest strategy, the protestors had their words broadcast far beyond the gallery, to an extremely wide audience – many of whom would usually ignore climate protestors. Their strategy was extremely efficient: two protestors, acting alone, made international headlines – and the painting survived unscathed.

Two concerns deserve consideration. First, iconoclasm's capacity to attract media attention may be a function of its novelty. When climate protestors started attacking artworks, in 2022, iconoclasm was a relatively unusual protest strategy. Two years later, its novelty is wearing off. Media attention is correspondingly declining. Novelty – rather than iconoclasm *per se* – seems to make the difference. This suggests that any value iconoclasm derives from its power to grab attention may fade with repetition.¹⁶ It does not count decisively against iconoclasm as a protest strategy, but it does suggest that (insofar as it is a desirable strategy *because* it attracts attention) we may reach a different verdict on the protest strategy when it is novel (e.g. in 2022, at the time of the *Sunflowers* attack) compared with when it is familiar (e.g. today).

Second, neither grabbing attention nor having one's words broadcast is enough. Each matters only insofar as it helps protestors achieve their ultimate goals (e.g. ecological reform). Achieving those goals also requires that protestors stand a realistic chance of *persuading* their audience. While iconoclastic climate protests have been much discussed, the reception has been broadly unsympathetic. If iconoclasm is so contentious that protestors only alienate their audiences, eroding public sympathy for their cause, iconoclasts' success in communicating their message widely seems a Pyrrhic victory.

Iconoclastic protestors should not be too deterred by public condemnation, though. Rejection of protestors' tactics does not entail rejection of their cause.¹⁷ Indeed,

protestors who make themselves targets for hate may nonetheless successfully get their cause onto the agenda.¹⁸ Even if press coverage initially focuses on criticising protestors' tactics, it can subsequently present protestors with opportunities they would not otherwise have had to communicate about their cause. Following the *Sunflowers* attack, environmental activists interviewed by mainstream media outlets were initially compelled to discuss Just Stop Oil's tactics, but often responded by pointing out the hypocrisy of condemning the temporary defacement of a 'mere' depiction of plant life, while disregarding the permanent extinction of swathes of life on earth. They drew attention away from tactics and towards their cause, successfully communicating about the climate emergency *despite* condemnation of Just Stop Oil's strategy.

Phoebe Plummer, one of the activists who attacked the *Sunflowers*, was still interviewed on national television well into 2023,¹⁹ taking every opportunity to highlight the urgency of the climate emergency.²⁰ Moreover, media platforms often interviewed unpopular climate activists alongside science and policy experts.²¹ Non-activist experts could represent a more moderate faction of the climate movement – and side-by-side contrast with radical activists helped to portray them as comparatively reasonable.²² Whether or not the experts endorsed the activists' strategies, they enjoyed a rare opportunity to communicate climate science and highlight the urgency of the climate crisis. Thus, even as Just Stop Oil made itself unpopular, it succeeded in creating opportunities for climate experts to communicate the need for policy change, and provided the conditions for those experts to appear moderate and reasonable (by contrast with radical activists).

Media coverage in the aftermath of the *Sunflowers* attack demonstrated that iconoclasm created valuable opportunities for successful communication *despite* being an unpopular tactic, even a tactic that made the public less sympathetic to Just Stop Oil. Although media coverage initially focused on tactics, iconoclasm created communicative opportunities in the short and medium term – opportunities enjoyed not only by iconoclasts, but also by other activists and experts.

The second concern expressed an important insight, though: it is prudent to avoid alienating one's audience when possible. This does not mean that iconoclasm is always off limits – but iconoclasts may wish to tread carefully. One way to do this is to avoid permanently damaging artworks: iconoclasts can attract considerable attention just by *appearing* to damage artworks. If iconoclasts can reap the attentional benefits of *apparently* damaging an artwork without incurring the costs of *actually* damaging an artwork, the former seems preferable to the latter – but even iconoclasts who only *seem* to inflict damage cannot always rely on their audience to recognise that the damage is only apparent, and not actual. Consequently, it is also important to design iconoclastic attacks that 'speak for themselves': iconoclasts should take care to select the right artwork, and attack it in the right way. Some iconoclasm produces only ruined artwork; other forms of iconoclasm allow protestors to communicate unusually directly with their audience. In Section 3, I explore how shrewd decision-making can help iconoclasts optimise their protests – minimising the risk of alienating their audience, while maximising the opportunities for persuasive communication.

3. Communication and Symbolism

Representational artworks (especially photorealistic or naturalistic artworks, which are very 'life-like') represent things particularly *vividly*. For viewers, it is only a short

imaginative step from looking at an artistic representation of an object to imagining its real-world counterpart. By attacking masterful representations, iconoclasts can more directly and readily make their audiences imagine – and emotionally engage with – real-life threats to the objects being represented. This gives iconoclastic protestors an advantage over protestors who use other methods to communicate with their audience.

Consider Picasso's enormous anti-war painting *Guernica*. *Guernica* depicts mangled, contorted bodies, people and animals fleeing or lying wounded, and a woman wailing over her dead child. It conveys the visceral horror of the bombing of Guernica during the Spanish Civil War. Since 1985, a tapestry reproduction of *Guernica* has hung in the United Nations' New York headquarters – but, in 2003, it was covered up during then-Secretary of State Colin Powell's address in favour of war in Iraq, possibly under pressure from United States, who objected to the 'optics' of the anti-war artwork providing the backdrop to Powell's pro-war address.²³ During the conference, protestors gathered outside the UN holding reproductions of the covered painting.²⁴ A brutal depiction of the horrors of war, *Guernica* served as a focus-point for protestors who opposed war in Iraq.

In 1974, Tony Shafrazi spray-painted the words 'KILL LIES ALL' across *Guernica*. Shafrazi was protesting the Vietnam war – but also inviting his audience to appreciate afresh *Guernica*'s anti-war sentiments. He explained: 'it was crazy to me that a painting like the *Guernica* was ... relegated to a place of absolute insignificance. The force, the power, the real significance ... that painting had, had been shoved aside.'²⁵ By attacking *Guernica*, Shafrazi hoped to highlight what the artwork had to say.

When protestors attack an artwork with representational content relevant to the injustice being protested, they can use the artwork itself to channel attention towards their cause. By defacing *Guernica*, Shafrazi brought his audience's attention to the painting – and thereby directed attention to its instantly recognisable anti-war message. Shafrazi harnessed *Guernica*'s message to amplify his own message of opposition to the Vietnam War.

Protestors can use an artwork's representational content to communicate even when the artwork is not itself protest art. In 1914, when Mary Richardson slashed Velázquez's *Venus*, she sought to demand women's suffrage and protest the mistreatment of Emmeline Pankhurst: 'she emphasised the fact that she was striking an inanimate representation [of a woman] in order to save the living Pankhurst from being tortured in prison.'²⁶ Richardson highlighted parallels between the damage to Velázquez's *Venus* and 'the real and very visceral experience that Emmeline Pankhurst was undergoing, her body weak from starvation and the torture of being force fed, her body *actually* being torn apart.'²⁷ As she was led away, Richardson proclaimed: 'you can get another picture but you cannot get another life, and they are killing Emmeline Pankhurst.'²⁸

Can we say the same thing about recent iconoclastic attacks carried out by climate protestors? Consider the following argument. When Plummer and Holland attacked the *Sunflowers*, they directed attention toward the natural world (symbolised by the sunflowers) and the destruction wrought on nature by human activity (symbolised by their defacement of the represented sunflowers). Their symbolic attack on a representation of sunflowers directed their audience's attention, via the artwork, towards the parallel, *literal* destruction of the natural world (particularly plant life). Their attack helped viewers more vividly to imagine the injustice they were communicating about. By carefully chosen manipulation of the representational content of the *Sunflowers*, they were able to communicate about environmental degradation.

In the case of the *Sunflowers* attack, this analysis seems relatively weak: sunflowers are only tenuously construed as a representation of the natural world, so their defacement is not likely to put onlookers in mind of ecological destruction more generally.²⁹ The analogous analysis of Richardson's attack on Velázquez's *Venus* seems more compelling: Venus's female body is a good stand-in for Pankhurst's female body, so the painting was highly relevant to the injustices Richardson sought to protest.³⁰

When the artwork is well-selected, portraying something obviously and clearly relevant to the injustice being protested, iconoclastic manipulation of the artwork's representational content can help protestors communicate directly and non-verbally with their audience about the injustice at hand.

Non-verbal communication is important: images stick with us. Whereas 'words are processed by our short-term memory, where we can only retain about seven bits of information', images 'go directly into long-term memory, where they are indelibly etched'.³¹ Protestors have long recognised the importance of visual symbols: consider the immediate association of the peace symbol with the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, or the hourglass symbol with Extinction Rebellion. When protestors attack artworks, they transform those artworks into emblems of their cause. (Looked at this way, some instances of so-called iconoclasm might equally be called iconogenesis: interventions that *produce* new symbols, using artworks as raw material.) Audiences respond to these images more rapidly, and remember them for longer, compared with protestors' verbal statements.³²

Consequently, iconoclasm presents distinctive opportunities, but also distinctive hazards. If iconoclasts produce a visual encapsulation of their cause (like the slashed body of Venus, mirroring and highlighting the torture of imprisoned Suffragettes), protestors can use the iconoclastic act itself to communicate vividly and memorably. But if iconoclasts get their imagery wrong – if they produce wanton ruin, rather than powerful symbolism – they may alienate their audience, no matter the probity of their cause.

4. Controversial Symbolism

That iconoclasm's power to create striking symbols can backfire is perhaps most evident when we consider attacks on artworks depicting people. It is widely accepted that political protestors should not commit violent attacks against people.³³ Violent attacks on persons breach minimal standards of acceptable behaviour in moral and political relationships. Willingness to inflict violence on other people indicates profound disregard for the 'ongoing communal project of living together'.³⁴ It is partly by abstaining from violent attacks on people that protestors demonstrate commitment to this project, thereby distinguishing themselves from militants and revolutionaries. When iconoclasts attack an artwork representing a person, the symbol produced through the attack evokes associations with violent attacks against actual people – attacks that have no place in political protest.

Consider the toppling of Bristol's Edward Colston statue by anti-racist protestors in 2020. The toppling was extremely controversial – largely because of perceived parallels between the activists' treatment of the statue, and the person-directed violence it evoked. The attack was described as a 'lynching' and a 'public execution',³⁵ provoking allegations that activists 'might well have treated the real Edward Colston in much the same way had he been there in flesh rather than in bronze'.³⁶

Notwithstanding the important moral differences between attacks on persons and on statues (cf. Section 5), these responses demonstrate that activists who attack artworks representing persons risk being *perceived* to condone violence against persons. The symbols created through their attacks are uncomfortably close to violent attacks on living persons. If protestors seem to condone attacks against persons – even if only through symbolic parallels – then the wider public may perceive protestors to have abandoned ordinary standards of moral and political conduct. This dramatically increases the risk that protestors alienate their audience.

Protestors could minimise this risk by avoiding attacks on representations of persons completely. This would be costly, though: as I have argued, iconoclasts can use such attacks to powerful effect, if the person(s) represented can stand in for the victim(s) of some injustice. Recall Richardson's attack on Velázquez's *Venus*: Richardson manipulated the *Venus* to produce a powerful symbol of Pankhurst's torture in prison.

More modestly, iconoclasts could limit this risk through careful choices about which person – or type of person – is represented in the artwork they attack. If protestors attack an image of a *perpetrator* of injustice (e.g. Colston), their attack risks being perceived as an endorsement of yet more violence, perhaps in retribution for the injustice they protest.³⁷ On the other hand, if protestors attack the image of a *victim* of injustice (e.g. Venus/Pankhurst), their attack produces an evocative symbol of violence that *already exists* – violence that the protestors are clearly objecting to, not endorsing.

Iconoclasts should take care over the symbolic resonance of their acts even when they do not attack representations of persons. In the absence of any other, more obvious symbolism, an iconoclastic attack is likely to be interpreted 'by default' as an act of mere destruction – undifferentiated from ordinary vandalism, aiming to communicate nothing about any particular *cause*, and therefore communicating only the attackers' disregard for valuable and beloved art objects. This highlights the importance of careful target selection: only if the iconoclastic attack creates a clear visual symbol of protestors' cause, which overrides the appearance of mere destruction, can protestors avoid giving the (mistaken) impression that they are committing an assault on the beloved artistic treasures of a community – and, hence, the community itself.³⁸

5. Civil Disobedience

In light of these distinctive strengths and controversies, how does iconoclasm measure up as a protest strategy? The answer may depend on our background theory of permissible political protest. I will consider two such theories – one on which disobedience must be civil, and another on which disobedience must satisfy standards of proportionality and necessity. I do not adjudicate between these theories, but I provide grounds to think that, on a plausible version of each theory, iconoclastic protests can be permissible.

Many theorists and activists maintain that law-breaking political protest is permissible only when it is a form of *civil disobedience*.³⁹ The precise characterisation of civil disobedience is highly contested, and it is beyond the scope of this article to engage the full debate. Proposed criteria for civility include publicity; non-violence; conscientious conviction; last resort; non-evasion; acting in accordance with decorum or sociability; and aiming to bring about change by communicating with the government and the public, rather than by imposing one's will unilaterally on others.⁴⁰ These constraints attempt to capture what

sets civil disobedience apart from militant resistance and revolution, conscientious objection, and lawful protest.

Iconoclasm satisfies some of these standards. As discussed in Section 3, iconoclasm is usually public and communicative. Non-evasion is not essential to iconoclastic protest, but is common among political iconoclasts. Iconoclastic climate activists usually glue themselves to the frames of paintings after defacing them,⁴¹ broadcast footage of their protests on social media, and submit to arrest; Suffragette iconoclasts also turned themselves over to security guards after attacking artworks.⁴² Non-evasion is clearly *compatible* with iconoclasm, and can be described as a constraint on civil engagement in this mode of protest. Conscientious conviction requires that protestors be 'motivated by steadfast, sincere and serious (though possibly erroneous) moral convictions'.⁴³ Climate iconoclasts' conscientiousness is often made evident in the speeches they make after attacking an artwork. In other instances of iconoclasm, particularly when the artwork attacked is morally contentious, protestors' conscientiousness is evident in the tags applied to defaced artworks (cf. Lim's discussion of graffiti labelling Confederate statues with the word 'racist').⁴⁴ Iconoclasm may also satisfy non-violence and last resort conditions, depending on how these criteria are construed. Iconoclasm reliably violates norms of decorum. If disobedience must be civil in order to be permissible, then to establish its permissibility we need to know more about the non-violence, last resort, and decorum conditions.

The scope of the non-violence constraint is disputed, as is the concept of violence itself.⁴⁵ First, there are politically important distinctions between different types of violence. Violence directed towards other people, when constitutive of an act of protest, is rightly prohibited for civil disobedients, because it undermines the possibility of living with other people in a community. To live in a community with others, individuals cannot respond to inevitable disputes by inflicting violence on one another. As noted earlier, other-directed personal violence is at odds with treating other people as 'members of the ongoing communal project of living together'.⁴⁶ Consequently, it is incompatible with a 'commitment to the political' – that is, to the 'shared cooperative project of living together'.⁴⁷ This commitment is an essential part of what distinguishes civil disobedience from militancy or outright revolution. Thus, it is appropriate for civil disobedience to exclude other-directed, constitutive personal violence.

The same cannot be said for other forms of violence. In general, violence directed towards objects does not exclude anyone from political community. There may be some exceptions to this general principle: some objects are necessary to keep people alive, or to provide individuals with the minimum material conditions required to take part in public life. To attack those objects would be incompatible with a commitment to the political, but this applies to a relatively narrow class of objects – paradigmatically, medical equipment, food, and shelter. It is highly unlikely that it applies to works of art. This suggests that, when we stipulate that civil disobedience must be non-violent, we should mean that civil disobedience must not involve other-directed, constitutive *personal* violence. Characterised correctly, the non-violence condition would not rule out violent attacks on works of art.⁴⁸

What about the last resort constraint? We could simply deny that civil disobedience must be a last resort. Adams appears to take this view, pointing out that it is not civil disobedience but militant revolution that is truly the last resort: 'civil disobedience is likely one of the steps that must be explored *before* a last resort constraint is fulfilled'.⁴⁹ Moreover, requiring prospective disobedients first to register complaint through legal channels,

before engaging in civil disobedience, unfairly excludes certain portions of the population from expressing political dissent: as Delmas points out, ‘ordinary channels of grievance are often inaccessible to the most disadvantaged members of society, either *de facto* (e.g., for the poor, the disaffected youth, the elderly) or *de jure* (e.g., for convicts and unauthorized immigrants)’.⁵⁰

More importantly, we can also characterise the last resort constraint in such a way that it is compatible with iconoclasm. For Rawls, the last resort constraint requires only that ‘past actions [in pursuit of the protestors’ cause] have shown the majority immovable or apathetic’.⁵¹ This certainly seems to be the case for climate protest groups: more than two decades of law-abiding and mass protest have consistently failed to provoke meaningful environmental reform.⁵² Moreover, for Rawls, some injustices are ‘so extreme that there may be no duty to use first only legal means of political opposition’.⁵³ In these cases, the ‘presumption’ in favour of a last resort constraint is waived. Insofar as the harms of climate change constitute an ‘outrageous violation’ of Rawlsian basic principles of justice, prospective environmentalist iconoclasts may not even need to show that a majority has been ‘immovable or apathetic’ in the face of previous protests. It is enough to note, as environmentalists do, that we face an unprecedented emergency characterised by ecological breakdown, extreme weather, flooding, fire, drought, crop failure, famine, and political instability exacerbated by mass migration.⁵⁴ Against this backdrop, it seems highly plausible that the Rawlsian ‘last resort’ standard will either be met or waived for prospective environmentalist iconoclasts.

What about decorum? Although iconoclasm seems an egregious violation of decorum, relatively few theorists insist on a decorum requirement. Of those who do, Bedau is among the most notable. For Bedau, ‘the pun on “civil” is essential’: disobedience must be polite, as well as politically motivated.⁵⁵ Plenty reject this outright.⁵⁶ As Meyer points out, ‘serving the distinct interests of a society of citizens, and not those of polite society ... may ... require behaviour – like indecorous, even at times rancorous, public disagreement – that is at odds with polite society’.⁵⁷ If it seems bizarre that decorum or politeness would be demanded at all, recall Delmas’s definition of decorum as what ‘we need to get along with people with whom we disagree’.⁵⁸ On one reading, ‘getting along with’ people means politeness. Indeed, Delmas later says that decorum requires people to ‘behave in a dignified ... manner and avoid causing offence’. But we could alternatively read ‘getting along with’ people more thinly, to refer to minimal standards of behaviour compatible with living together in political community. Interpreted this way, what Delmas calls decorum instead amounts to the notion of political commitment familiar from Adams and discussed above: a commitment to treating others as co-participants in a communal project of living together. Decorum-as-political-commitment requires neither politeness nor compliance with prevailing norms of social behaviour – but is a widely recognised constraint on civil disobedience. Though decorum-as-political-commitment probably does not capture what Bedau had in mind in his punning comment, it is a more apt constraint on civil disobedience than politeness.⁵⁹ Moreover, it is compatible with iconoclasm.

In light of this discussion of the non-violence, last resort, and decorum conditions, we can conclude that iconoclasm *can* count as civil disobedience, under a suitably expansive understanding of the term. On one commonly held view, this is sufficient for its permissibility.

6. Beyond Civility

Another school of thought rejects wholesale the claim that political protest must meet conditions of *civil disobedience*. Some contend that, whatever the moral or tactical value of civility, *uncivil* disobedience is also sometimes permissible.⁶⁰ Sometimes, civil strategies would be too slow to address an urgent injustice that uncivil disobedience could address more rapidly. Sometimes, communication would be futile because an injustice is already recognised but goes unremedied, so it makes little sense to impose a communication constraint. Sometimes, civil options seem excessively burdensome for protestors or the public, but an uncivil strategy would secure a fairer distribution of costs.

If we deny that disobedience must be civil, we might nonetheless want to impose *some* constraints on permissible disobedience. We might appeal, instead, to principles of proportionality and necessity to regulate political protest.⁶¹ These principles are familiar from the ethics of self-defence and war, where they regulate the imposition of morally weighted harm. Again, there is extensive debate over how best to characterise these principles.⁶² The principles would probably also require adaptation before being applied in the context of political protest: in more familiar contexts, they regulate harms to persons, but in the protest context they would also have to regulate actions involving only property damage. In self-defence and war, they apply primarily to acts that uncontroversially avert imminent threat, but this seems a poor characterisation of many political protest contexts.⁶³ Moreover, associated principles such as the means principle, which are accepted in the contexts of war and self-defence, would be out of place in the protest context. So, principles of proportionality and necessity used to regulate protest would inevitably differ from principles by the same names regulating harms imposed in war and self-defence. Nonetheless, with appropriate amendments, such principles could comprise a coherent framework for evaluating political protest without implying that civil disobedience is inherently preferable to uncivil disobedience.

Provisionally, we can characterise the principles as follows. Proportionality requires that the harms imposed by protestors are not excessive in relation to the harms protestors expect to avert.⁶⁴ Necessity requires that the harms imposed by protestors do not exceed the level required to achieve the desired result (e.g. mitigation of injustice).⁶⁵ Colloquially, necessity concerns whether a protest strategy *works*, and works *significantly better* than less harmful alternatives.⁶⁶ It is a standard strictly weaker than logical necessity.⁶⁷

To evaluate iconoclasm against these criteria, we need to compare the harms imposed by iconoclasts with the ends achieved through iconoclasm. We also need to know whether iconoclasts stand a better chance of achieving these ends than protestors who opt for less harmful protest strategies.

The harms of iconoclasm depend on whether an artwork is damaged, destroyed, or merely defaced. If an artwork sustains no actual damage, only apparent damage, we might imagine that the attack inflicts no harm at all. A more sober assessment reveals that the attack probably comes at *some* cost. Most generally, when protestors disobey the law, their example makes law-breaking more visible and less 'taboo'. Disobedience risks eroding the rule of law, on which social stability and security depend. This risk is not negligible, but is probably slight enough to be easily outweighed by protestors advancing or drawing attention to a just cause. More specifically, highly public attacks on paintings may inspire others to conduct similar iconoclastic attacks in the future. This seems to be borne out by a recent increase in iconoclastic protests carried out by animal rights activists and pro-Palestine protestors.⁶⁸ An increase in art-attacking protests may have unexpected financial consequences for

museums, and for public access to artwork. Hans-Peter Wipplinger, director of a museum housing an artwork attacked by climate activists, explains that after the attack the ‘insurance value of the work ... suddenly jumped from 60 to 140 million Euros’.⁶⁹ Wipplinger worries that, as insurance costs increase, some artworks may become unaffordable for publicly funded galleries, or galleries may become more dependent on financial support from wealthy private collectors. This loss of financial independence may leave public access to artwork less secure. By this mechanism, the normalisation of even non-damaging political iconoclasm may threaten some opportunities for the public to encounter art.

If an artwork requires repair, protestors inflict additional harm associated with the money and time required for cleaning and repair – though when an artwork can be fully repaired, a sufficiently important cause is likely to outweigh this harm. If an artwork sustains lasting damage, the degree of harm imposed depends on the quality of the targeted artwork. If protestors damage a work of little value, the degree of harm will be lower than if they damage a masterpiece. Permanently damaging a masterpiece deprives others of the opportunity to encounter an artwork of great aesthetic value – part of the common cultural heritage of humanity, to which all persons have an equal claim. Nonetheless, even attacks causing permanent damage do not necessarily leave us worse off. Although damage often decreases an artwork’s cultural and financial value,⁷⁰ this is not universally true – particularly when the painting was damaged in an interesting way. Banksy’s shredded artworks are a case in point.⁷¹ Rather than diminishing our shared artistic and cultural heritage, iconoclastic attacks on valuable artworks sometimes ‘[add] layers of significance to the works and [contribute] to their relevance and value to the public’.⁷² Iconoclasm can be a form of ‘creative destruction’,⁷³ if iconoclastic attacks create new, secondary artworks. Sometimes, vandalised artworks become powerful pieces of protest art: the vandalised monument to Confederate Robert Lee, spraypainted with ‘Stop White Supremacy’ and ‘Blood On Your Hands’ by BLM protestors, was transformed from racist symbol to anti-racist icon, becoming one of the ‘most influential American protest artworks since WWII’.⁷⁴ The artefacts produced through iconoclastic acts can be culturally valuable because of the strong political statements they convey. This suggests that the harms of iconoclastic protest may not be so severe as they first appear, even if protestors cause irreversible damage.

If these are the harms of iconoclasm, could iconoclasm satisfy the proportionality constraint? Clearly, (dis)proportionality depends partly on specific facts about particular cases. An iconoclastic protest that leaves the artwork undamaged is more likely to be proportionate than an attack inflicting repairable damage; a protest inflicting superficial and repairable damage is, in turn, more likely to be proportionate than a protest that permanently damages or destroys an artwork. If protestors do inflict lasting damage, the protest is more likely to be proportionate if the artwork is of lesser cultural and aesthetic value. Moreover, if an iconoclastic protest produces a powerful protest artwork, or a moving symbol of protestors’ cause (cf. Section 3), the cultural and communicative benefits of the act are greater, and thus more likely to outweigh any harm done.

Perhaps more surprisingly, the proportionality of an iconoclastic protest also depends on the context in which the protest occurs. If political iconoclasm is rare, an iconoclastic protest is more likely to take onlookers by surprise and to capture attention. Insofar as attention is a prerequisite for accessing the other benefits that protestors seek (cf. Section 2), iconoclasts will more easily accrue benefits that offset the harms of their protest in contexts where political iconoclasm is rare. Moreover, some harms are much more likely to be incurred if political iconoclasm is normalised than if iconoclastic protests

remain isolated incidents. This is particularly apparent when we consider harms associated with increased insurance costs for artworks deemed to be possible protest targets. These considerations both suggest that, if protest should be proportionate, iconoclasm is a strategy to be used sparingly.

Plummer and Holland's *Sunflowers* attack provoked genuine shock because, in 2022, political iconoclasm was a fringe protest tactic not associated with the climate movement. The context was ripe for their non-damaging iconoclastic protest to meet the proportionality standard. Two years on, environmentalist political iconoclasm is becoming quotidian. In this context, accruing the attentional benefits enjoyed by earlier iconoclasts is much more difficult, so it has become harder for iconoclasts to offset the harms they impose. In the short-term future, iconoclastic attacks are less likely to satisfy the proportionality standard. In the medium to longer term, if protestors pause their attacks on artworks, political iconoclasm may fade from public awareness. If it does, iconoclasm may recuperate its shock value, and become more likely to satisfy the proportionality standard.

To judge iconoclasm 'necessary', in the technical sense, we must determine with reasonable confidence that iconoclasts could not have achieved the same success by pursuing a less harmful alternative strategy. Because the results achieved through political iconoclasm vary contextually, whether an iconoclastic protest meets the necessity standard will be context-sensitive, but we can consider some important cases.

Did Plummer and Holland's iconoclastic attack on the *Sunflowers* count as necessary? That is, did it work better than less harmful alternatives would have done? The answer is surely 'yes'. Compare the enormous media impact of the *Sunflowers* attack with the (negligible) impact of the 'Big One', a four-day civil disobedience campaign conducted by a coalition of climate protest groups and attended by 60,000 people in May 2023.⁷⁵ The contrast is stark. The 'Big One', like most non-disruptive climate demonstrations, was almost entirely ignored,⁷⁶ despite the participation of thousands of protestors and a considerable administrative burden imposed on the police. It achieved nothing. Plummer and Holland's iconoclasm was minimally burdensome: it required only two protestors, took little time to organise and execute, caused minimal disruption to the public, and inflicted no permanent damage on the artwork (only minimal damage to its frame) – yet it captured the attention of the media for months. Few other climate protests seem to have been so effective, at such little cost.

The 'Big One' represents just one alternative to iconoclasm among many – but the (non-)response it garnered is representative of the usual response to climate protests. Over the past three decades, British climate activists have organised marches, shut down major motorways, and disrupted sports events and concerts, as well as conducting iconoclastic attacks. Marches and other conventional protests are mostly ignored. Extinction Rebellion's two-week occupation of central London during Spring 2019 was a notable exception: this campaign was genuinely successful in increasing public concern about the climate crisis,⁷⁷ prompting the UK government to declare a climate emergency and pass a legally binding target of net zero emissions by 2050,⁷⁸ but subsequent attempts to replicate Extinction Rebellion's Spring 2019 strategy have not yielded comparable success. Disruption to sports events and concerts held media attention only fleetingly. Road-blocking protests may have attracted a level of attention rivalling iconoclasm, particularly Insulate Britain's and Just Stop Oil's protests which repeatedly shut down the M25, the UK's busiest motorway⁷⁹ – but, as commentators eagerly pointed out, probably imposed greater harms. Perhaps most problematically, given protestors' cause, blockading motorways causes a direct increase in pollution and emissions.⁸⁰ Additionally,

road blocking probably inflicts more disruption on non-liable members of the public than iconoclasm. Compared with these rival strategies, it seems highly plausible that the *Sunflowers* attack satisfied the necessity constraint.

7. Conclusion

At its best, iconoclasm can focus attention on injustice in a way few other modes of protest can. Strategically planned iconoclasm enables protestors to engage the imagination of their audience, and to communicate about their cause in a vivid and memorable way: non-verbal communication, achieved through manipulation of artworks, can be much more compelling than verbal communication. Iconoclasm is at its best when protestors attack an artwork with representational content relevant to their cause. When they do so, their iconoclastic attacks transform artworks into powerful symbolic representations of their cause. Iconoclasm bears distinctive risks: if protestors do not produce an emblem of their cause, but produce only a vision of ruin, they fail to realise the communicative potential of iconoclasm, and risk alienating their audience. Moreover, protestors should turn to iconoclasm only rarely. If political iconoclasm becomes normalised, the protest strategy will lose its ability to command attention, and protestors will begin to impose higher costs on galleries and members of the public. I evaluated iconoclasm against two theories of political protest, and suggested that iconoclasm may be permissible under either theory. I conclude that iconoclasm is a maligned but potentially extremely valuable protest strategy, when done right. Climate protestors who have resorted to political iconoclasm in recent years may well have been justified in doing so – particularly early adopters, like the activists who so memorably attacked van Gogh's *Sunflowers* with Heinz tomato soup.

Alice Madeleine Hilder Jarvis, Faculty of Philosophy, University of Cambridge, Cambridge, UK. amh250@cam.ac.uk

Acknowledgements

I began writing this article during Master's studies, funded jointly by the Cambridge Trust and Darwin College, Cambridge. I completed this article during doctoral studies, funded jointly by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AH/R012709/1) and Christ's College, Cambridge. I am very grateful to Sarah Fine, Thomas Sinclair, John Marenbon, Derek Matravers, Jack Walker, Pen Hilder Jarvis, and conference participants at the University of Oxford for their constructive comments and encouragement. I would also like to thank four anonymous reviewers for their insightful suggestions.

NOTES

- 1 I avoid the rival term 'vandalism' because its connotations of thoughtlessness may unduly bias against art-attacking protest. Historically, the term 'iconoclasm' has been reserved for attacks on *religious* art, but increasingly the term is also applied to attacks on non-religious artworks (Barber and Boldrick, *Art under Attack*; Scott, "Confronting Nightmares"). My usage reflects this.

- 2 Dixon, "Artistic (Counter) Speech"; Frowe, "Statues of Wrongdoers"; Lai, "Political Vandalism."
- 3 The protests also differ from acts of 'aesthetic disobedience' (Neufeld, "Aesthetic Disobedience"): they aim to protest *political* norms and commitments, not *artworld* norms and commitments.
- 4 GBNews, "Net Zero Clash"; Just Stop Oil, "Phoebe Plummer TalkTV"; Reuters, "UK Climate Change Protestors"; Telegraph, "Just Stop Oil."
- 5 Barber and Boldrick, *Art under Attack*.
- 6 Aloï, "38 Attacks."
- 7 Burga, "Animal Rights Activists"; Harris, "Pro-Palestine Protestors."
- 8 Gardiner, "Attunement"; Medina, *Epistemology of Protest*.
- 9 Brown, "Eco Mob"; Burke, "Mash for Brains."
- 10 Gatten, "Just Stop Oil Stunt"; Just Stop Oil, "Phoebe Plummer Newsnight"; Symonds, "Just Stop Oil."
- 11 Cf. Brinck, "Attention."
- 12 Saint-Croix, "Review."
- 13 Harlow and Brown, "Perceptions versus Performance"; Klein and Regan, "Dynamics of Political Protests"; Li, "Zero-Sum Game"; Yuen and Cheng, "Neither Repression Nor Concession"; cf. Aktan, "Three Essays"; Bishara, "Politics of Ignoring."
- 14 Communication may *also* be desirable (even obligatory) for other reasons – e.g. to demonstrate conscientiousness (Brownlee, *Conscience and Conviction*; Lim, "Differentiating Disobedients") or to open a dialogue. What matters is that direct disobedience can succeed (on its own terms) without communication, but indirect disobedience cannot.
- 15 Jones, "Climate Activists."
- 16 This is common to many political protest strategies, but is particularly problematic for *indirect* protest strategies, because the capacity of indirect protest to achieve its goals depends on protestors capturing public attention. This is much easier when the strategy is novel, hence shocking.
- 17 Davis ("Just Stop Oil"; "Psychology of Protest") describes a series of experiments, the results of which suggest that unpopular or extreme protest strategies, which do erode public support for protestors, do *not* harm public support for protestors' demands.
- 18 Fisher *et al.* ("Swaying Policy") affirm the power of protests to set news agendas, citing a doubling of mentions of 'insulation' – but not 'insulate' – in UK print media after Insulate Britain's September 2021 protests. They conclude that protest can raise public concern with protestors' *causes*, not just protestors themselves.
- 19 GBNews, "Net Zero Clash"; Just Stop Oil, "Phoebe Plummer TalkTV."
- 20 One consequence of valuing iconoclasm for its potential to open opportunities for communication is that we might prefer iconoclasts to be skilled communicators (especially, interview participants), so they can maximise resulting opportunities to communicate about their cause.
- 21 Just Stop Oil, "Phoebe Plummer Newsnight."
- 22 Simpson *et al.*, "Radical Flanks."
- 23 Jhala, "Guernica Removed."
- 24 Walsh, "UN Conceals Guernica."
- 25 Bidoun, "Tony Shafrazi."
- 26 Barber and Boldrick, *Art under Attack*, 17.
- 27 *Ibid.*, 124.
- 28 *Ibid.*
- 29 The analysis seems somewhat stronger when assessed in the context of other visual material distributed online by Just Stop Oil. See, in particular, their Instagram post of 15 October 2022 (Just Stop Oil, "@Just.StopOil").
- 30 Iconoclasm may be most apt when activists protest injustice taking the form of the destruction of some valuable material object(s). In such cases, protestors can choose an artwork representing the valuable thing, then easily suggest parallels between a destructive attack on the artwork and the unjust, 'real-life' destruction of the valuable thing.
- 31 Raworth, *Doughnut Economics*, 17.
- 32 Brady *et al.*, "Visual Long-Term Memory"; Fraisse, "Reaction Times"; Paivio and Csapo, "Picture Superiority."
- 33 King, *Chaos or Community*; Rawls, *Theory of Justice*; cf. §5.
- 34 Adams, "Uncivil Disobedience," 11.
- 35 Zigmond, "Iconoclasm," 3.
- 36 Featherstone, "Toppling Our Heroes."

- 37 Here, I do not necessarily condemn the particular attack on the Colston statue. I merely highlight the additional risks run by the Colston Four, pointing out that iconoclasts who seek to avoid these risks could do so by modifying their strategy in certain ways.
- 38 Note that iconoclastic acts, like other forms of symbolic communication, are liable to distortion in public discourse. It is unlikely that any protestors relying on symbolic communication can perfectly guard against the possibility that their act will be misrepresented as sanctioning violence (or some other offensive act). Protestors can minimise this risk in the ways I have outlined, but probably cannot eliminate it. It is inherent in the non-verbal mode of communication which, I have argued, is a great strength of the iconoclastic strategy.
- 39 Bedau, "Civil Disobedience"; Brownlee, *Conscience and Conviction*; Celikates, "Civil Disobedience"; Extinction Rebellion, "About Us"; King, *Chaos or Community*; Rawls, *Theory of Justice*.
- 40 Bedau, "Civil Disobedience"; Delmas, *Duty to Resist*; Lai and Lim, "Fairness of Costs"; Rawls, *Theory of Justice*; Welchman, "Ecosabotage."
- 41 Gayle, "@DamienGayle"; Letzte Generation, "@AufstandLastGen."
- 42 Barber and Boldrick, *Art under Attack*.
- 43 Brownlee, "Conscientious Objection."
- 44 Lim, "Vandalizing Tainted Commemorations."
- 45 Adams, "Uncivil Disobedience"; Marcou, "Violence"; Welchman, "Ecosabotage."
- 46 Adams, "Uncivil Disobedience," 11.
- 47 Ibid., 6.
- 48 Most criticism of the non-violence constraint takes for granted that attacks on objects can, in principle, be violent. This coheres with a 'common sense' conception of violence, according to which it is possible to behave violently towards a person, a painting, or indeed any object. Some have denied this, arguing instead for a conception of 'violence' that *only* covers actions targeting persons (Glover, "Black Blocs"; Morreall, "Justifiability of Violent Disobedience"). In my view, these accounts are too revisionist, straying too far from the 'common sense' notion of violence under which (for example) an angry person who punches a hole in a wall *acts violently*, even though his action does not target a person (Adams, "Uncivil Disobedience"). These accounts also depart from the standard legal conception of violence: a Court of Appeal investigation into the toppling of the Colston statue concluded that the protest *was* violent (EWCA Crim 1259 [2022]), even though protestors targeted an object, not a person. Because they are so revisionist, I will not discuss these views. It suffices to note that, if ostensibly violent attacks on non-persons do not really *count as* violent, then iconoclasm is straightforwardly compatible with a non-violence constraint.
- 49 Adams, "Uncivil Disobedience," 5–6, emphasis added.
- 50 Delmas, "Civil Disobedience," 687–8.
- 51 Rawls, *Theory of Justice*, 328.
- 52 Fisher, *Saving Ourselves*.
- 53 Rawls, *Theory of Justice*, 328.
- 54 IPCC, *Special Report*; World Food Programme Editorial, "Act Now"; Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, *Risks and Responses*; iPES Food, "NEWS."
- 55 Bedau, "Civil Disobedience," 656.
- 56 Adams, "Uncivil Disobedience"; Bardon *et al.*, "Disaggregating Civility"; Delmas, *Duty to Resist*, Milligan, *Civil Disobedience*; cf. Bejan, *Mere Civility*.
- 57 Meyer, "Liberal Civility," 72.
- 58 Delmas, *Duty to Resist*, 43.
- 59 For further discussion, see Adams, "Uncivil Disobedience"; Bardon *et al.*, "Disaggregating Civility"; Delmas, *Duty to Resist*.
- 60 Delmas, *Duty to Resist*; Lai, "Justifying Uncivil Disobedience"; Lai and Lim, "Fairness of Costs."
- 61 Lai, "Justifying Uncivil Disobedience"; Lai and Lim, "Fairness of Costs"; Lim, "Differentiating Disobedients."
- 62 Lazar, "Necessity"; McMahan, *Proportionality*; Quong, "Defensive Harm."
- 63 In particular, although many harms of climate change are imminent (or already present), it is doubtful that *any* act of protest uncontroversially averts them.
- 64 Here, I adapt McMahan's characterisation of proportionality (McMahan, *Proportionality*). Note: when protests *mitigate* injustice without *eliminating* it, the harms imposed must be proportionate not to the severity of the injustice being protested (cf. Lai, "Justifying Uncivil Disobedience," 95) but to the harms protestors reasonably expect to avert. There are epistemic problems associated with predicting whether a protest will avert harm, but these epistemic problems are not unique to iconoclastic protest, so I do not discuss them here.

- 65 Lai and Lim, "Fairness of Costs."
- 66 This might be made precise by adapting Lazar (*Necessity*): protestors pursuing strategy S, with morally weighted harms H_S , satisfy Necessity if and only if a reasonable person in the protestors' position, with access to the available evidence, would judge that there is no less harmful alternative strategy A, with morally weighted harms H_A (where A counts as less harmful if the marginal risk of H_S compared with the risk of H_A is not justified by a countervailing marginal reduction in risk to those who are the victims of the harms that protestors seek to mitigate or eliminate).
- 67 Satisfying the necessity criterion requires only that any alternative strategy that would impose less expected morally weighted harm must reduce protestors' *expected* success (i.e. the amount of morally weighted harm that they expect to mitigate through their protest) *by enough of a margin* that protestors would do better to pursue the strategy that involves imposing more morally weighted harm.
- 68 Burga, "Animal Rights Activists"; Harris, "Pro-Palestine Protestors."
- 69 Bregman, "Oil Splash."
- 70 Argun, "Art Pricing."
- 71 Argun, "Banksy."
- 72 Barber and Boldrick, *Art under Attack*, 121.
- 73 Mitchell, *What Do Pictures Want?*, 18.
- 74 Dixon, "Artistic (Counter) Speech." See also Lim ("Vandalizing Tainted Commemorations" and "Transforming Problematic Commemorations") for discussion of how iconoclasm can radically redefine the meaning of artworks.
- 75 Richmond, "Big One."
- 76 BBC News explained, in response to 'complaints [that] insufficient coverage was given to ... "The Big One"', that 'stories, and the amount of time we spend on them, are chosen due to their editorial merit' (BBC, "Extinction Rebellion"). Non-disruptive protests simply fail to be newsworthy.
- 77 Kenward and Brick, "Large-Scale Disruptive Activism."
- 78 Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy, "UK Net Zero Law."
- 79 BBC, "Insulate Britain"; BBC, "Dozens of Activists Arrested"; BBC, "M25 and Dartford."
- 80 Whatever we think of allegations of hypocrisy levelled at protestors (cf. Beck, "Climate Hypocrisy"; Shklar, "Hypocritical"; Sinclair, "Real Problem of Hypocrisy"), most climate protestors would presumably accept that these emissions *are* a harm, even if they maintain that the harm is outweighed.

References

- Adams, N. P. "Uncivil Disobedience: Political Commitment and Violence." *Res Publica* 24, no. 4 (2018): 475–491.
- Aktan, D. "Three Essays on Protests, Repression, and Signalling: Chapter 3: Ignoring or Responding to Protests." PhD diss., University of Denver 2023. <https://digitalcommons.du.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=3207&context=etd#page=64.09>.
- Aloi, G. "After 38 Attacks on Art, Climate Protesters Have Fallen into Big Oil's Trap – It's Time to Change Tack." *Guardian*, February 6 2024. https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2024/feb/06/after-38-attacks-on-art-climate-protesters-have-fallen-into-big-oils-trap-its-time-to-change-tack?CMP=share_btn_url.
- Argun, E.-A. "How To Value Art: A Guide To Art Pricing & Appraisals." MyArtBroker 2023. <https://www.myartbroker.com/collecting/articles/how-to-value-art-guide-to-art-pricing-and-appraisals>.
- Argun, E.-A. "The Banksy Shred: Five Years in the Market." MyArtBroker 2024. <https://www.myartbroker.com/artist-banksy/articles/banksy-shred-five-years-in-the-market>.
- Barber, T., and S. Boldrick. *Art under Attack: Histories of British Iconoclasm*. London: Tate Publishing, 2014.
- Bardon, A., M. Bonotti, S. T. Zech, and W. Ridge. "Disaggregating Civility: Politeness, Public-Mindedness and Their Connection." *British Journal of Political Science* 53, no. 1 (2022): 308–325.

- BBC News. "Insulate Britain: Angry Motorists Confront M25 Protestors." BBC News, October 13 2021. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-essex-58896047>.
- BBC News. "Just Stop Oil: Dozens of Activists Arrested Over M25 Protest." BBC News, November 7 2022a. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-london-63539967>.
- BBC News. "Just Stop Oil Protests Affect M25 and Dartford Crossing." BBC News, November 8 2022b. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-essex-63552488>.
- BBC News. "Extinction Rebellion Protest." BBC News, April 26, 2023. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/contact/complaint/extinctionrebellionbigone>.
- Beck, V. "Climate Hypocrisy and Environmental Integrity." *Journal of Social Philosophy* 56, no. 2 (2025): 223–242. <https://doi.org/10.1111/josp.12522>.
- Bedau, H. "On Civil Disobedience." *Journal of Philosophy* 58 (1961): 653–665.
- Bejan, T. *Mere Civility: Disagreement and the Limits of Toleration*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2017.
- Bidoun. "Tony Shafrazi: All Lies." *Bidoun* 18 (Summer) 2009. <https://www.bidoun.org/articles/tony-shafrazi>. Accessed June 1, 2023
- Bishara, D. "The Politics of Ignoring: Protest Dynamics in Late Mubarak Egypt." *Perspectives on Politics* 13, no. 4 (2015): 958–975.
- Brady, T. F., T. Konkle, G. A. Alvarez, and A. Oliva. "Visual Long-Term Memory Has a Massive Storage Capacity for Object Details." *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 105, no. 38 (2008): 14325–29.
- Bregman, A. "Oil Splash Activists Say Death and Life by Gustav Klimt Protest Was Not an Attack." *Forbes*, November 24 2022. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/alexandrabregman/2022/11/24/oil-splash-activists-say-death-and-life-by-gustav-klimt-protest-was-not-an-attack/>.
- Brinck, I. "Attention and the Evolution of Intentional Communication." *Pragmatics and Cognition* 9, no. 2 (2001): 259–277.
- Brown, T. "Eco Mob Target Another Masterpiece! German Climate Activists Throw Mash Potatoes over Monet's 'Les Meules' at Barberini Museum Then Glue Themselves to the Floor." *Daily Mail*, October 23 2022. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-11345793/German-climate-activists-throw-MASH-POTATOES-Monets-Les-Meules-Barberini-Museum.html>.
- Brownlee, K. *Conscience and Conviction: The Case for Civil Disobedience*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012a.
- Brownlee, K. "Conscientious Objection and Civil Disobedience." In *The Routledge Companion to Philosophy of Law*, edited by Andrei Marmor, 527–539. Abingdon: Routledge, 2012b.
- Burga, S. "Animal Rights Activists Posted a Cartoon Image over King Charles' Portrait." *Time*, June 11 2024. <https://time.com/6987521/animal-rights-king-charles-portrait-vandalized/>.
- Burke, O. "Mash for Brains Eco-Idiots Hurl Mashed Potatoes over £100 Million Monet Painting & Glue Themselves to Wall in Daft Stunt." *Sun*, October 23 2022. <https://www.thesun.co.uk/news/20199054/eco-idiots-hurl-mash-potatoes-monet-painting-glue-themselves-floor/>.
- Celikates, R. "Civil Disobedience as a Practice of Civic Freedom." In *On Global Citizenship: James Tully in Dialogue*, edited by David Owen, 207–228. London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2014.
- Davis, C. "Just Stop Oil: Do Radical Protests Turn the Public Away from a Cause? Here's the Evidence." *The Conversation*, October 21 2022a. <https://theconversation.com/just-stop-oil-do-radical-protests-turn-the-public-away-from-a-cause-heres-the-evidence-192901>.
- Davis, C. "The Psychology of Protest." Oxford Brookes Centre for Psychological Research Seminar Series. Video 2022b. <https://brookes.cloud.panopto.eu/Panopto/Pages/Viewer.aspx?id=384ad6d2-e8c1-4f38-bb5f-af1e00e54fda>. Accessed January 19, 2025
- Delmas, C. "Civil Disobedience." *Philosophy Compass* 11, no. 11 (2016): 681–691.

- Delmas, C. *A Duty to Resist: When Disobedience Should Be Uncivil*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018.
- Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy. "UK Becomes First Major Economy to Pass Net Zero Emissions Law." *gov.uk*, June 27 2019. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-becomes-first-major-economy-to-pass-net-zero-emissions-law>.
- Dixon, D. "Artistic (Counter) Speech." *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 80, no. 4 (2022): 409–419.
- Extinction Rebellion. "About Us." 2023. <https://extinctionrebellion.uk/the-truth/about-us/>. Accessed June 3, 2023
- Featherstone, R. "On the Toppling of Our Heroes." RM Featherstone 2022. <https://rmfeatherstone.co.uk/?p=1>. Accessed September 17, 2024
- Fisher, D. *Saving Ourselves: From Climate Shocks to Climate Action*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2024.
- Fisher, D., O. Berglund, and C. J. Davis. "How Effective Are Climate Protests at Swaying Policy – and What Could Make a Difference?" *Nature* 623 (2023): 910–923.
- Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. "Climate Change and Food Security: Risks and Responses." 2015. <https://www.fao.org/3/i5188e/I5188E.pdf>.
- Fraisse, P. "Motor and Verbal Reaction Times to Words and Drawings." *Psychonomic Science* 12, no. 6 (1968): 235–36.
- Frowe, H. "The Duty to Remove Statues of Wrongdoers." *Journal of Practical Ethics* 7, no. 3 (2019): 1–31.
- Gardiner, G. "Attunement: On the Cognitive Virtues of Attention, chap. 2." In *Social Virtue Epistemology*, edited by Mark Alfano, Jeroen de Ridder, and Colin Klein. Abingdon: Routledge, 2022.
- Gatten, E. "Just Stop Oil Stunt 'Made People Care Less About Climate Change'." Telegraph, February 2 2023. <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2023/02/02/climate-protesters-van-gogh-stunt-made-people-less-worried-climate/>.
- Gayle, D. "@DamienGayle: Activists with @JustStop_Oil have thrown tomato soup on Van Gogh's..." *Twitter*, October 14, 2022, 11.12 am 2022. <https://twitter.com/damiengayle/status/1580864210741133312?s=20>.
- GBNews. "Just Stop Oil's Phoebe Plummer Argues "People are DYING" in Net Zero Clash with Jacob Rees-Mogg." *YouTube*, March 27, 2023. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8AbAurKzI48>
- Glover, R. M. "'When We Smash Windows ...' Black Blocs and Breaches of the Peace." *Criminal Law Review* 11 (2017): 830–846.
- Harlow, S., and D. K. Brown. "Perceptions Versus Performance: How Routines, Norms and Values Influence Journalists' Protest Coverage Decisions." *Journalism* 23, no. 2 (2020): 372–390.
- Harris, G. "Police Investigating Pro-Palestine Protestors' Vandalism of Painting at Cambridge University." *Art Newspaper*, March 11 2024. <https://www.theartnewspaper.com/2024/03/11/police-investigating-pro-palestine-protestors-vandalism-of-painting-at-cambridge-university>
- IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change). "Climate Change and Land: an IPCC Special Report on Climate Change, Desertification, Land Degradation, Sustainable Land Management, Food Security, and Greenhouse Gas Fluxes in Terrestrial Ecosystems." 2019. <https://www.ipcc.ch/site/assets/uploads/2019/11/SRCCCL-Full-Report-Compiled-191128.pdf>
- iPES Food. "News: IPCC: Transform Agriculture or Climate Change Will Inflict Unprecedented Hunger." February 28 2022. <http://www.ipes-food.org/pages/news-IPCC-transform-agriculture-2802022>

- Jhala, K. "Tapestry Replica of Picasso's Anti-War Masterpiece *Guernica* Removed from United Nations Headquarters after 35 Years." *Art Newspaper*, February 26 2021. <https://www.theartnewspaper.com/2021/02/26/tapestry-replica-of-picassos-anti-war-masterpiece-guernica-removed-from-united-nations-headquarters-after-35-years>
- Jones, S. "Climate Activists Throw Mashed Potatoes at Monet Work in Germany." *Guardian*, October 23 2022. <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2022/oct/23/climate-activists-mashed-potato-monet-potsdam-germany>
- Just Stop Oil. "@Just.StopOil: Did Somebody Ask for Some Hot Take Soup? Follow @just.stopoil..." *Instagram*, 15 October 2022 2022a. <https://www.instagram.com/p/Cjv10IWtU9j/>
- Just Stop Oil. "Phoebe Plummer on BBC Newsnight, 02 November 2022, Just Stop Oil." YouTube, November 2 2022b. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZUV1vQHaILw>
- Just Stop Oil. "Phoebe Plummer Talks with Trisha Goddard, TalkTV, 5 February 2023, | Just Stop Oil." YouTube, February 5 2023. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fF6v9Hm2osQ>
- Kenward, B., and C. Brick. "Large-Scale Disruptive Activism Strengthened Environmental Attitudes in the United Kingdom." *Global Environmental Psychology* 2 (2024). <https://doi.org/10.5964/gep.11079>.
- King, M. L. *Where Do We Go from Here: Chaos or Community?* New York: Harper & Row, 1968.
- Klein, G. R., and P. M. Regan. "Dynamics of Political Protests." *International Organization* 72, no. 2 (2018): 485–521.
- Lai, T.-H. "Justifying Uncivil Disobedience." In *Oxford Studies in Political Philosophy Volume 5*, edited by David Soble, Peter Vallentyne, and Steven Wall, 90–114. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019.
- Lai, T.-H. "Political Vandalism as Counter-Speech: a Defense of Defacing and Destroying Tainted Monuments." *European Journal of Philosophy* 28, no. 3 (2020): 602–616.
- Lai, T.-H. "Environmental Activism and the Fairness of Costs Argument for Uncivil Disobedience." *Journal of the American Philosophical Association* 9, no. 3 (2023): 490–509.
- Lai, T.-H., and C.-M. Lim. "Environmental Activism and the Fairness of Costs Argument for Uncivil Disobedience." *Journal of the American Philosophical Association* 9, no. 3 (2023): 490–509.
- Lazar, S. "Necessity in Self-Defense and War." *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 40, no. 1 (2012): 3–44.
- Letzte Generation. "@AufstandLastGen: wir stellen der Gesellschaft dieselbe Frage wie 2 Frauen mit..." *Twitter*, October 23, 2022, 2.22pm 2022. <https://twitter.com/AufstandLastGen/status/1584173527749779456?s=20>
- Li, Y. "A Zero-Sum Game? Repression and Protest in China." *Government and Opposition* 54, no. 2 (2019): 309–335.
- Lim, C.-M. "Differentiating Disobedients." *Journal of Ethics and Social Philosophy* 20, no. 2 (2021): 119–143.
- Lim, C.-M. "Vandalizing Tainted Commemorations." *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 48, no. 2 (2020a): 185–216.
- Lim, C.-M. "Transforming Problematic Commemorations through Vandalism." *Journal of Global Ethics* 16, no. 3 (2020b): 414–421.
- Marcou, A. "Violence, Communication and Civil Disobedience." *Jurisprudence* 12, no. 4 (2021): 491–511.
- McMahan, J. "Proportionality in Self-Defense and War." 2010. https://fsi-live.s3.us-west-1.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/evnts/media/McMahan_ProportionalityRevised_5-2011.pdf
- Medina, J. *The Epistemology of Protest*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2023.
- Meyer, M. J. "Liberal Civility and the Civility of Etiquette: Public Ideals and Personal Lives." *Social Theory and Practice* 26, no. 1 (2000): 69–84.

- Milligan, T. *Civil Disobedience: Protest, Justification and the Law*. London: Bloomsbury, 2013.
- Mitchell, W. J. T. *What Do Pictures Want? The Lives and Loves of Images*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005.
- Morreall, J. "The Justifiability of Violent Civil Disobedience." *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 6, no. 1 (1976): 35–47.
- Neufeld, J. "Aesthetic Disobedience." *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 73, no. 2 (2015): 115–125.
- Paivio, A., and K. Csapo. "Picture Superiority in Free Recall: Imagery or Dual Coding?" *Cognitive Psychology* 5, no. 2 (1973): 176–206.
- Quong, J. "Proportionality, Liability and Defensive Harm." *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 43, no. 2 (2015): 144–173.
- Rawls, J. *A Theory of Justice*, Revised ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999.
- Raworth, K. *Doughnut Economics: Seven Ways to Think Like a 21st-Century Economist*. London: Random House Business, 2017.
- Reuters. "UK Climate Change Protestors Throw Soup at van Gogh's 'Sunflowers'." *Reuters*. 2022. <https://www.reuters.com/world/uk/uk-climate-change-protesters-throw-soup-van-goghs-sunflowers-2022-10-14/>
- Richmond, T. "The Big One Showed the Power of 'Friendly Protest' – and Its Limitations." *Greenpeace*, May 10 2023. <https://www.greenpeace.org.uk/news/big-one-xr-friendly-protest/#:~:text=It%20was%20a%20gathering%20for,for%20people%20and%20the%20planet>
- Saint-Croix, C. "Review of José Medina, the Epistemology of Protest: Silencing, Epistemic Activism, and the Communicative Life of Resistance." *Criminal Law and Philosophy* 19, no. 1 (2025): 164–174.
- Scott, H. "Confronting Nightmares: Responding to Iconoclasm in Western Museums and Art Galleries." PhD diss., University of St Andrews, 2009 https://research-repository.st-andrews.ac.uk/bitstream/handle/10023/788/HelenScottPhDThesis_Volume1.pdf?sequence=7&isAllowed=y
- Shklar, J. "Let Us Not Be Hypocritical." *Daedalus* 108, no. 3 (1979): 1–25.
- Simpson, B., R. Willer, and M. Feinberg. "Radical Flanks of Social Movements Can Increase Support for Moderate Factions." *PNAS Nexus* 1, no. 3 (2022): 1–11.
- Sinclair, T. "The Real Problem of Hypocrisy for Extinction Rebellion." *Medium*, July 19 2019. <https://medium.com/extinction-rebellion/the-real-problem-of-hypocrisy-for-extinction-rebellion-4a6851dcdeb7>
- Symonds, H. "Just Stop Oil: How Far Is Too Far?" *The House*, April 30 2024. <https://www.politicshome.com/thehouse/article/stop-oil-far-far>
- Telegraph. "Just Stop Oil Protestors Throw Soup on Van Gogh's Sunflower Painting." *YouTube*, October 14, 2022 2022. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LJ-dr4xyMgk>
- Walsh, D. "UN Conceals Picasso's 'Guernica' for Powell's Presentation." *World Socialist Web Site* 2003. <https://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2003/02/guer-f08.html>
- Welchman, J. "Is Ecosabotage Civil Disobedience?" *Philosophy and Geography* 4, no. 1 (2001): 67–107.
- Editorial, World Food Programme. "Act Now on Climate Crisis or Millions More Will Be Pushed into Hunger and Famine." *World Food Programme* 2021. <https://www.wfp.org/stories/act-now-climate-crisis-or-millions-more-will-be-pushed-hunger-and-famine>
- Yuen, S., and E. W. Cheng. "Neither Repression Nor Concession? A Regime's Attrition against Mass Protests." *Political Studies* 65, no. 3 (2017): 611–630.
- Zigmond, D. "Iconoclasm: Is This Our Best Route to 'Being on the Right Side of History'?" 2022. <http://www.davidzigmond.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/Article-152-Iconoclasm.pdf>