

How can we build a political theory able to take into account the different normative and moral roles of emotions, and in particular of negative emotional reactions towards social injustices? To answer this question, in my paper I will try to clarify some specific aspects of negative emotions like anger, indignation, outrage, fear and hate, when they are triggered by experiences of injustice, on three main levels: the level of the individuals or groups who are victims of injustice, the level of observers, social critics and politicians and more generally of the “emotional public sphere”, and the level of the political institutions and militants. Particular attention will be paid to the ambivalence of these types of emotions in the subjects of injustice: they can trigger positive and emancipatory reactions that can lead to processes that can promote moral progress or democratic engagement and also the struggle for rights; but they can also result in reactions that we can define as of a depressive and regressive nature, and that can lead to populist drift and to diverse individual and collective behaviors. The analysis of this ambivalence, and its articulation on the above-mentioned three-level structure, can also contribute to establishing an interdisciplinary theoretical framework that may prove to be useful also for considering and preparing political strategies to face the many important events in contemporary societies linked to individual and collective negative emotions.