What form of rationality can interact with the world of emotions? What rationality can strengthen the so-called “public passions”? namely those passions able to form the emotional cement of social action tending to the creation of a common project, or to the elimination of the multiple forms of suffering and exclusion?

This issue hosts a number of papers on this topic that scholars from different countries discussed in a research meeting at the University of Bergen – Norway last June, funded by the Department of Philosophy.

Emotions are currently an issue at the heart of theoretical debates about political questions, from nationalism to identity and populism. Social and cultural theory placed emotions and affects at the centre of political research and analysis and opposed the liberal idea that politics should only be concerned with reasoned arguments. The so-called “Affective Turn” or “Turn to emotions” has taken place both in analytic and continental philosophy, and emotions are now examined in extensive multidisciplinary studies from evolutionary neuroscience to sociology and political science, from moral philosophy to cultural history. However, shortcoming of this “emotional turn” seems to be that it focuses on the study of emotions “per se” rather than their interaction with reason in social and political contexts. There are, thus, good reasons to be critical of the emotional turn in political theory and praxis. The contemporary conceptual displacement of the ideal political subject – as rational decision-maker who tries to maximize her preferences – by the “emotional” subject could easily undermine the delicate balance of the rational and the emotions requisite for sound decision making.

We can therefore ask ourselves what kind of relationships exist between reason and emotions. Or rather what kind of rationality we can delineate starting from this relationship.

Very often, the political subject affectively perceives certain aspects of reality, is emotionally attached to certain ideas, feels a strong belonging to its own tribe and often feels an equally strong rejection of other groups, desires what others desire. All these can have the most formidable political consequences, since emotions can easily turn into “sad passions” as envy or fear and erode social cohesion. What kind of rationality is able to dialogue with this political subject?

Aristotle already emphasized the political and social function of benevolence (eúnoia) that he called “political friendship” (politiké philía), distinguishing from phílesis (affection), since it also arises for the strangers and exists among virtuous citizens not aimed at the defence of mere personal advantages. Benevolence therefore has a political-social sense “ab origine”, which is prolonged in modern thought and in the Enlightenment, in the tradition of the moral sentiment with Shaftesbury and Hutcheson, and then in Hume and Smith.

Political and rhetorical uses of the term “solidarity” have increased over the past two decades in often conflicting theoretical contexts. Especially at the beginning of the pandemic crisis, the appeal to solidarity was almost unanimous on the part of the most diverse political factions. It almost seems that we are returning to the sense of solidarity already analysed by Louis Bourgeois in 1914: to a social evil, such as contagious disease, we respond with a common, solidarity struggle. In these various rhetorical uses, solidarity seems to be a vague and imprecise concept. In fact, the concept of solidarity has to do with numerous related concepts. Actually, it is often defined in relation to opposite or supplementary concepts. From the fraternity of the Jacobins to the social cohesion of Comte and Durkheim, there is talk of solidarity whether linked to consensus on interests or the pursuit of rights, or else to a generic disposition of benevolence, love and gift. Being part of the interpersonal socio-emotional skills, solidarity varies in relation to the emotional tones that guide agreements and contrasts: sympathy-antipathy, love-hate, fear-hope.

Obviously, this does not mean that benevolence and solidarity, like all emotional horizons, do not have a negative “side”, even capable of destroying us. The beneficence’s role of mediator between egocentric or selfish feelings, and altruistic ones has often been criticized, noting that benevolent love is nothing more than a disguised form of extreme selfish interest. The idea of solidarity is also ambivalent, because, as Robert Michels observed, one is always in solidarity against someone. It can therefore be limited to an exclusive “we”, as opposed to a world of strangers or enemies.

Emotions are in fact ambivalent and unpredictable, they cannot only be distinguished into positive and negative: even positive emotions – benevolence, inclusion, love – are capable of deception and pitfalls; while “negative” passions such as shame and indignation can unite individual and society and help to build individual and social identity.

The speeches at the conference and the essays that we present here address these issues starting from the analysis of different concepts and emotional horizons. Concepts such as democracy, freedom of speech and justice were addressed, in relation to positive and negative moral feelings and solidarity.

Guðmundur Heiðar Frímannsson (*Citizenship and emotions*) and Pascal Nouvel (*The making and unmaking of political emotions with narratives*) discuss the theme of the relationship between emotions and politics. Frímannsson discusses the role of emotions in modern democracy. Nouvel addresses the theme through the analysis of the narrative.

The focus of Frimannsson is the concept of citizenship, the relation between an individual and a political authority; but above all the mutual trust of citizens. If feelings are infused with reason, they can and should be controlled in the public life of democracy. When everything is normal – says Frimannsson – they work in unison with reason, they are part of a well-ordered human rationality forming a whole human being. The problem is perhaps to understand what it means “everything is normal”.

Pascal Nouvel discusses the relationship between the three notions of affects, narratives, and politics referring to Renan, Halbwachs and Ricœur. Narratives are part of the core notion of what constitutes a nation through the affects of belonging. They also tend to generate the distinction between history and memory. Through the reference to Ricoeur the author argues that it is possible to arrive at a position that respects but also claims to go beyond this distinction.

The concept of justice and sentiments are analysed by Akim Erives (*The role of indignation and other moral sentiments in the construction of a common (and solidary) sense of justice*) and Dora Elvira García-González (*Notes for the construction of a philosophy of peace through reason and emotions*).

Akim Erives highlights how some “negative” moral sentiment, like anger, resentment, and indignation, can be related with the sense of justice, according to the Rawlsian interpretation. So, the sense of justice, together with a sense of solidarity, channels them into a collective demand for justice and the construction of a common sense thereof.

Dora Elvira García-González joins Rawls’ theory of justice and the philosophy of care by Carol Gilligan. With both theories in conjunction, it seems possible to construct some approaches to thinking about peace both from a normative perspective and from its application.

Fabrício Pontin with Johannes Servan (*From liberal prudence to open institutionalism*) address the relationship between freedom and emotion. They argue that Mill’s conceptions of freedom of speech as a “market of ideas” agree with Adam Smith’s description of free market. And Mill’s defense of freedom of speech is not unconditional since it is aligned with Adam Smith’s less familiar view of the conditions in which a market works, which are connected to moral sentiments and the development of positive emotions. The authors claim therefore that the model of the connection between an open space for expression and the liberal, institutional, progress of the public sphere has become increasingly unable to provide regulatory and moderating clues for late modern challenges.

Tensions are also the hallmark of communication through social media. Anne Granberg (*The Absent ‘Thing’ and the Value of Distance: social media through an Arendtian lens*) warns us of the risk regarding the new digital media. Observing the move from the early techno-optimism to dystopian vistas of a chaotic “post-truth” political landscape, Granberg refers to the Arendt’s critique of “the social” and suggests that some problems specific to how we interact on social media justify skepticism regarding the new digital media as an arena for political activism and public debate.

In a diachronic approach that opens to contemporary issues, Paola de Cuzzani (*The principle of solidarity between sentiment and reason*) reconstructs the genealogy of the concept of solidarity: from the juridical meaning to the sentiment, sense of the bond and the political rationality suggested by Leon Bourgeois. According to Bourgeois, solidarity is based on the reciprocal relationship that all individuals have among themselves, on the intergenerational debt, and on the “quasi contract”. The path proposed by Bourgeois – she argues – can be a starting point for elaborating a possible social and political principle that is alternative to the neoliberal model of governance centered on competition.

Hans Marius Hansteen (*Brief Notes on Solidarity and Political Imagination*) reflects on the politics of imagination by commenting Etienne de La Boétie’s “Discours de la Servitude

volontaire” and his “disturbing” idea that commanding power is the result of obedience. By this de La Boetie introduces a relational and dynamic concept of power, which emerges from below. Based on this dynamic concept of power de La Boetie develops an image of what society might be like if people respected what nature and reason demand: acting freely, they would treat each other as brothers, and so implying solidarity as a fundamental social bond.

Alberto Giordano too (*“Secure the Blessing of Liberty to our Posterity”: The Founding Fathers and Intergenerational Solidarity*) goes back to the past, to the founding fathers of American democracy. He proposes a famous debate that involved Thomas Jefferson and James Madison, discussing moral and political obligations towards posterity not in terms of justice, but as a matter of intergenerational solidarity – though social, political and/or civic.

Lastly, Juliette Grange (*Extreme Tension on the Right in France*) brings us back to the present and to the political dynamics of extreme right in France, particularly the nationalist and populist approach, where strong emotions play a determining role.