

MA Thesis Prize 2019-20  
Department of Philosophy

Jointly winner

**Mirte Nijhof**

**‘Emotional Space: Affective Injustice and the Political Actor’**

Abstract for thesis:

As emotions are given more and more attention in philosophical research, new insights are starting to surface. One of these is the idea that human beings can suffer injustice in their capacity as affective beings (Archer & Matheson, 2020:8). Affective injustice is harm done to us as emotional creatures. In this thesis, I argue that political work can constitute such a harm. I build on the notion that emotional forces are always present in the public realm to show that every politician engages in emotional work. I question how (dealing with these forces in) their public role relates to the private individual performing the role. I introduce the political actor as a three-dimensional human being whose private and public self are connected. Emotional work can create a tension between the private and public self and as a result affective injustice may occur. I argue that, affective injustice happens when some politicians must work much harder to fit into the role of political actor than others, I call this kind of affective injustice ‘the affective double shift’. Moreover, I argue that affective expectations regarding a certain role can create a case of affective injustice, which generalises across the public realm. Affective injustice in this sense is not limited to the (affectively) marginalised politician but potentially sticks to the role of every political actor.

Judges motivation:

This thesis was of an extremely high quality, well written and with clear, rigorous philosophical arguments presented in support of the final conclusion. Although grounded in already existing debates on political emotions, the thesis took a novel approach to this, questioning the nature of emotional, or ‘affective’, injustice in the political sphere, and drawing on the distinction between the public and private ‘self’. What was particularly impressive, was the way in which the thesis used contemporary case studies to exemplify the arguments made, making the writing accessible and socially relevant not just to philosophers, but a wider, more general audience.