Introduction

"We don't revise a theory, but construct new ones; we have no choice but to make others."
Gilles Deleuze in Deleuze/Foucault (1980, 208)

"[T]he claim to escape from the system of contemporary reality so as to produce the overall programs of another society, of another way of thinking, another culture, another vision of the world, has led only to the return of the most dangerous traditions."
Michel Foucault (1984, 46)

In what ways is poststructuralism implicated in the hegemonic styles of thinking which it contests or seeks to move beyond? And how can we shift theory more consequently (or 'radically') beyond such complicity? These questions form the backdrop to my pursuits in this book.

My specific interest centers on the role of dualism in sustaining complicity between hegemonic discourses and styles of theorizing oriented to problematizing, transcending or transgressing these. While its centrality to hegemonic discourses has been much analyzed – for instance, in feminist and postcolonial theory – in this book I aim to show that dualistic thinking also plays a role in recent

counter-hegemonic discourses: Some theorizing associated with the ontological, material and affective turns, queer theory, and current diagnoses of the present tends to exhibit certain dualistic patterns too. This applies even to some of the very theories which specifically purport to leave dualism (or 'the dialectic') behind – such as Michael Hardt's and Antonio Negri's (2001, 140–146, 374–380, 405) or Karen Barad's (2003, 827–829; 2007, 419, n. 27, 429, n.11). That should not surprise us, since it is when we set out to break absolutely with what we oppose that we are most likely unwittingly to engage in a reverse discourse, as alluded by Michel Foucault in the epigraph. As analyzed in much of Cultural Studies, reverse discourse often takes the form of inverting a given dualistic hierarchy into its opposite without, however, questioning its hierarchical arrangement per se. Theorists of colonial discourse and racism, in particular, have contributed much to critiquing forms of oppositional discourse that would, for instance, turn established racialized hierarchies upside down by celebrating the previously devalued category ('the native'; 'black culture'), rather than questioning the underlying hierarchical opposition as such (Hall 1996; Gilroy 1987; 1993; Spivak 1990; Bhabha 1994).

In agreement with this line of problematizing dualism – namely, as hierarchical – I will argue in this book that the critique of dualism is, or should be, an egalitarian project and, conversely, that the reason why it is necessary to move beyond dualistic discourses is that they contribute to legitimizing and sustaining social inequality. This understanding of "dualism" is far from self-evident. It was well-established during the phase of 'high theory' that characterized poststructuralist approaches in Cultural Studies in the Anglophone world in the late twentieth century and continues to inform certain current work that is inflected strongly by deconstruction – such as Judith Butler's or Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's writings (e.g., Butler 1990; 2015b; Spivak 1990; 2012).

Up until the 1990s it even seemed to form part of critical 'common sense', within poststructuralist theorizing and Cultural Studies, to presuppose that one will be best equipped to minimize complicity with hegemonic discourses when one assumes self-critically that it is impossible to break with them absolutely, once and for all. The term

"antagonistic indebtedness" captures this rationale well (Gilroy 1993, 191). It is when we allow for such complicity, and even scrutinize in what ways it might subsist in oppositional discourses, that we can move beyond it to the farthest extent. This book is based upon the rationale that to trace the persistence of dualistic patterns in recent theorizing can assist us in reducing our 'antagonistic indebtedness' to such patterns, and hence, to unegalitarian styles of thinking.

Recent theorizing in the wake of the 'turns' I have mentioned has, however, tended rather to announce itself in terms of a break with what went before, theoretically speaking. As I will seek to show, such rhetoric too is not above producing hierarchical oppositions of its own. As Clare Hemmings (2005), Sara Ahmed (2008) and Carolyn Pedwell (2014) have each pointed out – with reference, respectively, to the ontological turn, to new materialism, and to the distinction between 'paranoid' and 'reparative' styles of critical practice – such self-announcement sometimes comes with a normative hierarchy in which what is offered as theoretically novel is set apart somewhat rigidly from an implicitly unoriginal or old-school 'before'. As glossed by Hemmings, narratives announcing such a break with the theoretical paradigms of an earlier generation at times "tend to the dismissive, and celebrate 'the new' as untouched by whatever we find ourselves currently transcending" (2005, 555). Thus, as Pedwell has shown, 'reparative' and 'paranoid' positions are sometimes juxtaposed as mutually exclusive in a move that – as she seems to imply – marks the first alternative as superior to the second. For instance, when she writes that "critique risks being labelled 'paranoid' and incapable of grappling with the ambivalences of power in the wake of 'the reparative turn'" (2014, 48; see also Pedwell 2014, 58–59, 61–62; Stacey 2014; Barnwell 2016). Arguably, the very term 'paranoid' is sometimes used derogatively – as a distance marker against which to contrast one's own position positively and, hence, as superior (see e.g. Cvetkovich 2012; Love 2007b for examples of this practice). Directly or indirectly, such hierarchizing moves may feed into the maintenance of unegalitarian social arrangements. Perhaps the best example of this is – as I discuss in chapter 3 – the way in which the conventional hierarchy between reason and emotion tends to

be inverted, in some work associated with the affective turn, such that 'affect' rather than 'discourse' or 'cognition' has been marked as superior – without, however, questioning either this very hierarchy or the rigid separation of the two categories that enables the normative privilege which either of these terms is assigned. Such either/or-ism[1] permits the categories at hand to remain highly gendered as well as racialized, even if only implicitly: The inversion of the conventional hierarchy between 'reason' and 'emotion' does nothing to upset the discursive order whereby 'reason' remains connoted as masculine and 'white' whereas 'affect' is associated with blackness, along with femininity and the 'queer' (see also Hemmings 2005, 561–562). This applies at least if we understand that axes of social inequality such as gender and race are *implicated* from the start in the classical dualistic oppositions that shape Western-style philosophy and theory, in the sense that these oppositions are constitutively gendered and racialized (Bordo 1986; Benjamin 1988; Flax 1993; Fischer 2016; Bargetz 2015, 583–584). On this understanding of dualism as being linked with unegalitarian social arrangements, only a more complex account of the relationship between 'reason' or 'discourse' and 'emotion' or 'affect' could confound these terms' connotations with (inter alia) masculinity and femininity respectively along with their resonances with gendered, racialized social hierarchies. In order to realize this, we need only to think of the association of blackness as well as femininity with irrationality – and inversely, of irrationality or unreason with femininity as well as blackness – and to take note of the well-established critique of the stereotyped character of any discourse that would seek to find value in this association, thereby affirming rather than subverting it. Such discourse affirms the *intrinsically devaluing* logic of stereotype – which fixes 'the Other' in place (Bhabha 1994, Ch. 3) even when it professes to celebrate the stereotype's content as 'authentic' or a 'positive image'.

Other dualisms which I will analyze in this book, as persisting in recent progressively oriented theorizing, similarly serve to stabilize

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1   I seem to remember Paul Gilroy using this expression in a course he taught at Goldsmiths College, University of London, in the 1990s.

unegalitarian social orders, as I will detail for the following conceptual pairs – most of them conventional dualisms; one of them a recent (Foucauldian) addition. Each chapter takes up one such pair: successively, I discuss the dualities of matter vs. mind or materiality vs. discourse in Karen Barad's agential realism – a highly prominent variant of new materialism (chapter 1); contrasting variants of the relationship between ontology and epistemology in Barad's work and in Dennis Bruining's, Antonio Negri's and Michael Hardt's (chapter 2); competing recent versions of the discourse/affect hierarchical opposition (chapter 3); the Foucauldian distinction between normalization and normativity, along with its use in recent queer-theoretical writings and diagnoses of the present (chapter 4); and, lastly, the relationship between negativity and affirmation in Sara Ahmed's work on happiness (chapter 5).

Each of these conceptual pairs has recently played a significant part in Cultural Studies – and/or in associated fields for which (post-)poststructuralism forms an important point of reference, such as political theory – in the configuration of a hierarchical opposition. Hierarchies of *matter/mind*, *ontology/epistemology*, *affect/discourse*, *normalization/normativity* and *negativity/affirmation* have all played such a part at the level of what has *structured* recent debate or, more generally, at the level of what structures Cultural Studies and associated disciplines as a discursive field – which is to say that these hierarchical oppositions are not in all cases asserted or addressed as such but, on the contrary, that they are significant for what remains *unquestioned* here; a merely implicit premise. It is a certain – spoken or unspoken – counter-hegemonic consensus that I want to "get at" with my discussion, in the interest of opening up for debate certain taken-for-granted presuppositions which I find problematic.

Preview of chapters

I have tried to arrange the chapters of this book in a way that allows me to pursue a line of inquiry which has oriented me in seeking to flesh out

(1) how thoroughly, in my view, some recent theoretical reflection with a counter-hegemonic orientation has remained implicated in hegemonic logics and orders – namely, in virtue of its dualistic tendencies; (2) just what it is that renders such tendencies problematic – namely, their hierarchizing character and the propensity of much hierarchical thinking to be unegalitarian in thrust (contrary to the intentions of many of its producers), and (3) what kind of discursive style would be most amenable to forestalling our tendency to replicate such effects at the level of theory. In the following preview of the book's individual chapters, I sketch the specific steps by which my line of inquiry proceeds. My problematization of the hierarchical oppositions focused on in each chapter is framed by a metacommentary of sorts, which progresses from one chapter to the next and which I seek to outline in brief below.

1   Matter/Mind

One unspoken premise of a currently highly prominent theoretical approach – that of agential realism (Barad 2003, 2007), a variant of new materialism – pertains to the very understanding of what 'dualism' is and what is problematic about it. This is a significant lacuna in an approach that bases itself in a declared need to leave dualism behind (Barad 2003, 827–829; 2007, 419, n. 27, 429, n.11). But the lacuna does not merely pertain to agential realism, in particular. A need to move beyond 'dualism' has also been accepted on all sides in the debate on new materialism, more generally, which was commenced by Ahmed's (2008) critique of some work central to that overall theoretical movement: the critique that some such work parades as breaking a taboo on studying materiality or 'matter' which it charges (earlier) feminist, 'social constructionist' or poststructuralist theory with having promoted (see chapters 1 and 2 of this book). And yet, despite the consensus stated on all sides of this debate as to the need to transcend dualism, just what accounts for the need to do so was in fact not addressed by most contributors to the debate either.

In chapter 1 I discuss the dualism between matter and mind in the context of further, closely associated dualisms (subject/object; active/passive) with a focus upon agential realism. As will become apparent, Barad – to the extent that she does formulate a critique of dualism at least implicitly – suggests that transcending dualism should mean refusing the very *distinctions* which are at the heart of the conventional dualisms most central to her theoretical approach, such as human/non-human, culture/nature, animate/inanimate but, most central of all, discourse/materiality. As I demonstrate, Barad tends (at times, even if not throughout her work) to designate dualism as problematic, and to be moved beyond, in that it asserts a difference to pertain between the respectively paired terms (see also Gunnarsson 2017, 116, 119–120). I argue that – contrary to this understanding of dualism – distinctions per se are *not* what renders dualistic trends in progressive theorizing complicit with the politics that should be problematized; such as racialized, gendered or even anthropocentric discursive/social orders.

On the contrary: Playing down differences or diluting distinctions is perfectly compatible with maintaining hierarchies (as I demonstrate with a view to Barad's own maintenance of the conventional, highly gendered hierarchy between 'active' and 'passive'). Before indicating why, I want to highlight just how important it is to understand this point when considering recent theoretical trends – even beyond agential realism and new materialism. A small detour through Lena Gunnarsson's recent discussion of the dualism between separateness and inseparability (2017, 117) within debates on intersectionality will help clarify the significance of the insight – which I will develop throughout much of this book with a view to the various dualities to be considered – that *questioning distinctions per se fails to remedy what is politically (and hence also theoretically) most problematic about dualism: This move is not per se any less hierarchizing and, hence, any less implicated in sustaining social inequalities.* While this is not by any means Gunnarsson's own point – she does not attend to the hierarchizing character of dualism at all, but only to its reductiveness – her discussion does underscore the relevance of what I will be critiquing

as an assimilationist, identitarian response to dualism within recent theoretical work relating to poststructuralism, especially in Cultural Studies.

Gunnarsson points out that competing sides in debates on intersectionality tend to emphasize *either* separation *or* unity one-sidedly in characterizing the relationship (of interaction/intra-action) between a number of axes of social inequality, such as gender, race and class. Identifying in many different feminist theoretical approaches, more generally (including Barad's), a "tendency [...] to challenge atomistic and dualistic modes of making distinctions by altogether denying separability", she analyzes this as a "mode of reversal" (in resonance with the notion of a reverse discourse upon which I draw) that "in fact reproduces the atomist's basic view of reality: either things are absolutely separate and autonomous, or they cannot be separated at all" (2017, 116; see also Gunnarsson 2013). I would reinterpret the dualism identified by Gunnarsson as "the most basic and problematic of all dualisms, that between separateness and inseparability itself" (Gunnarsson 2017, 117) as a dualism between *difference and sameness* or identity. That the latter forms the underlying, even more fundamental dualism here is suggested by Gunnarsson's own argument, according to which even the mere "tendency [...] to emphasize either *separateness or inseparability* is problematic in itself, since it easily reproduces absolutist and undifferentiated *notions of difference as well as unity*." (2017, 116; emphasis added). "[U]nity" as the dualistic antipode to the term "difference" would seem to amount to 'sameness'; to an absence of *differentiation* altogether rather than merely to 'something less than *separation*'. Difference is hence alternatively hypostatized or negated.

I would rephrase Gunnarsson's analysis, then, to the effect that a *meta-dualism* of sorts between *identity and difference* is at work when it comes to the tendency identified by her within and beyond feminist debates on intersectionality to accentuate either sameness/affinity or difference one-sidedly.[2] Based upon this analysis, it should be easy to

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2   This analysis already entails in itself – as I will emphasize throughout this book – that the first tendency fails to escape dualistic thinking. Answering dualism

see that hierarchical thinking can be maintained in *either* of these forms. This may be more obvious in the case of classical dualism – i.e. of binary opposition – as theorized in previous work within Cultural Studies and postcolonial theory (see above). That it does apply equally for the tendency, so apparent in Barad's theoretical approach, to understate or water down differences will be demonstrated at length in chapter 1. To anticipate my argument here:

If the difference between the two poles in any one dichotomy is *negated or understated*, one of the poles may yet be privileged as superior, more fundamental, or more important; as the conceptual or (purely) normative standard to which the other term is subordinated, whether explicitly or implicitly. Hierarchies can thus result from *assimilation* (of one term to another) and, hence, a *suppression of differences* between two terms just as readily as they can result from an explicit hierarchical opposition between two terms, of which one is rendered as superior (as occurs in discourses that practice Othering overtly, postulating a superiority of 'male' over 'female' or 'white' over 'black' based upon the assertion of hypostatized differences). Just as much as the first possibility, too, occurs, for instance, in some racialized discourses – namely, in the form of assimilationist universalisms (as analyzed, for instance, by Frantz Fanon [1986] and Roland Barthes [2006a] with a view to French imperialist discourse and rhetoric) – so it applies when differences between such theoretical terms as materiality and discourse, or activity and passivity, are negated or blurred, as I demonstrate in chapter 1 with a view to agential realism. This is why it amounts to a serious misunderstanding to imply, as does Barad, that the problem with dualism is that it *distinguishes* between theoretically fundamental terms as such. I argue in chapter 1 that it is perfectly

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by privileging similarity or even identity over and against difference is akin to an attempt to break with Hegelian dialectics by a simple act of negation – which, as has been pointed out time and again (Coole 2000; Butler 2012b) (and cannot be repeated often enough), amounts to remaining stuck in 'antithesis', i.e. in the very dialectical logic one seeks to leave behind. To attempt to break with dualism by practicing *the very opposite* of dualism obviously is to remain caught within a dualistic pattern.

possible to distinguish, for instance, subjects from objects in non-hierarchizing terms – that is, in an egalitarian spirit. The critique of dualism should be pursued in such a spirit. If, by contrast, we assume that theoretical distinctions (such as mind/matter) are problematic per se – whether or not they are drawn in a hierarchizing manner – then we will be likely to fail to guard against maintaining just such hierarchizing theoretical models in an *identitarian* form that erases or blurs important differences by way of modeling one term in a given conceptual pair on the other term, which is taken as primary. I will demonstrate in the first chapter of this book that this is what happens in agential realism, in that Barad maintains the conventional masculinist devaluation of passivity vis-à-vis activity in such a form that passivity is literally erased from the universe, while both matter and discourse are construed (and valued) exclusively in terms of their activity. This amounts to inscribing a masculinist dualism – active over passive – at the core of agential realism; as the very basis of its account of mind and matter.

If, as inferable from Gunnarsson's analysis, theoretical discourse tends to shift back and forth between the options of emphasizing difference at the cost of identity or emphasizing identity at the cost of difference, and if, at the same time, we understand dualism as problematic chiefly to the extent that it is hierarchizing, we need to consider identitarian (assimilatory) theoretical models versus theoretical models that hypostatize difference as variants of a meta-dualism that – in *either* variant – arranges conceptual counterparts in hierarchical terms, privileging the one term over the other by rendering it as primary or superior. Whether this occurs by way of opposing two terms to one another as mutually exclusive, or in the form of conflating them: in either case, what is in need of critique is the hierarchical opposition at hand. Theory is *not* complicit with hegemonic order in virtue of drawing distinctions – even fundamental distinctions such as the ones between discourse and materiality, active and passive or subjects and objects. Theory *operates* by drawing distinctions; it could not possibly proceed otherwise. It is only when a given distinction – or, alternatively, an identitarian assimilation of terms – entails any kind of *hierarchical opposition* between the terms in question, whether explicitly

or implicitly, that either move may become complicit with hegemonic orders, namely, when such oppositions stabilize *social inequalities*. Chapter 1 sets out in further detail, and concretizes based on the example of agential realism, why dualism should *really* be considered problematic: namely, due to it its participation in hierarchical thinking. *This* is what risks rendering theory complicit with social inequality, even when it is intended critically.

2   Ontology/Epistemology

The recent 'turns' in critical theorizing seem to emphasize difference at the cost of similarity or continuity whenever they normatively privilege 'the opposite' of those lines of theorizing from which they declare themselves to depart: It is obvious that the 'ontological turn' signals a turn *away* from epistemology, at least as a (similarly) one-sided pursuit. The same can be said of the affective turn in its self-positioning vis-à-vis an earlier discursive or cognitive emphasis. 'Negativity' and 'affirmation', too, tend to be played against each other (e.g. Halberstam 2011; Braidotti 2002), partially in the guise of a 'reparative' turn (Cvetkovich 2012; critically: Barnwell 2016; Pedwell 2014; Stacey 2014). It should be clear from the above that it is not my project to seek to answer this tendency to highlight distinctness, if not opposition, with a contrary tendency to privilege continuity or similarity instead. It is, as Gunnarsson has shown so convincingly, the very dichotomization of these alternatives that is problematic. The alternatives of privileging *either* 'sameness' *or* 'difference' narrow down thinking to two options as if these exhausted the spectrum of theoretical possibilities. The critique of dualism seeks to make *further alternatives* thinkable again. It is in search of such alternatives that, from chapter 2 onwards, I explore a third overall possibility for thinking difference, beyond the identitarian versus dichotomizing discursive logics addressed above.

   This is the possibility of theorizing difference as relationality-in-tension. I set out what this might mean, and the effects of doing so, in chapter 2 in the context of discussing the relationship between epistemology and ontology. I consider this third possibility

as a theoretically and politically rewarding alternative to the recently prominent and widespread dilution of difference (e.g. between matter and mind) which goes hand in hand with the mistaken criticism of distinctions as in themselves dualistic, addressed in chapter 1. My critical discussion of this tendency is simultaneously continued into chapter 2. Here I clarify with a focus upon the ontological turn that to *either* dichotomize ontological and epistemological pursuits against each other (as has occurred in Hardt's and Negri's work) *or* seek to reconcile them as part of a single "*ethico-onto-epistem-ology*" as if such fusion entailed no loss (as does Barad [2007, 185; emphasis in the original]) can go hand in hand with producing a hierarchical opposition whereby ontology is privileged, explicitly or implicitly, over and against epistemology. Such a bias generates necessary blind spots in one's analysis of power relations when it comes to the politics of knowledge, including the discursive, perspectival and therefore partial status of one's own theorizing. At the same time, to invert this hierarchy, such that epistemology is privileged over and against ontology, will merely produce necessary analytico-political blind spots of another kind, to the detriment of materialist analyses of power. I demonstrate this latter point through a critical discussion of Dennis Bruining's recent intervention (2016) into the debate on new materialism mentioned above. Bruining conceptually subordinates materiality to discourse and, by extension, ontology to epistemology in a hierarchizing fashion that is a mere mirror image of Barad's attempt to fuse the two at the price of tacitly subordinating epistemology.

As an alternative to any such hierarchical opposition between epistemology and ontology, I turn to some early work by Spivak which is oriented by deconstruction (see also Pedwell 2014). Deconstruction as practiced by her – namely, as a means of social critique; a critique of unequal power relations – emphasizes tension as a form of relationality. This provides a fruitful means of avoiding the twin traps of hypostatizing or collapsing difference, both of which tend to maintain hierarchical thinking. In chapter 2 I exemplify the productivity of this approach by arguing that the epistemological and ontological perspectives form each others' constitutive outsides, such that only

when one holds them together without privileging either perspective as a matter of principle, whilst at the same time acknowledging their incommensurability (i.e. the tension between them), can we do justice to how *each* of these perspectives renders apparent certain aspects of power whilst making others imperceptible – thereby generating effects of power of its own (as any discourse does). In this way, my discussion of the relationship between ontology and epistemology exemplifies how we can circumvent the twin problems of diluting distinctions or rendering them as mutually exclusive oppositions in favor of doing justice to *both difference and relationality*. The latter alternative is more readily amenable to an egalitarian perspective, understood as an orientation critical of all forms of social inequality.

3   Affect/Discourse

In reflecting, next, on how discourse and affect may be related to one another theoretically, I concretize one specific conceptual possibility for thinking relationality as tension, as a potential route towards the goal of drawing distinctions without establishing conceptual/normative hierarchies that resonate with unegalitarian social arrangements. In chapter 3, I explore the rhetorical figure of the chiasm – a crossing – as invoked fleetingly in some of Butler's recent work, as a concept-metaphor which, in some sense, extends the model of intersectionality (developed initially with a view to the relationship between race and gender) (Crenshaw 1991) to apply to the theorization of difference, more generally.

Much research on affect, emotion and feeling is characterized either by an identitarian reduction of affect to its discursive dimension or, alternatively, by a binary opposition between affect and discourse. In both cases, a hierarchy is usually maintained, which either subordinates affect to the discursive or privileges it over the discursive. This is to reproduce the conventional hierarchy between reason (or discourse) and emotion – whether straightforwardly or in inverted form, that is, by celebrating 'affect' whilst maligning 'discourse'. Yet in order to overcome this hierarchy, it is not enough merely to invert it,

for that would amount to a mere reverse discourse, as pointed out earlier. I argue that *either* variant of thinking the relationship between affect/emotion and discourse hierarchically is complicit with unegalitarian (gendered, racialized) discourses that are implicated in sustaining social inequality.

Based upon the model of the chiasm, I explore an alternative to the above modes of thinking about discourse and affect, which would be less prone to such complicity. I propose to conceive of feeling and discourse as *mutually implicating, yet irreducible to one another*. This would enable us to envisage discourse and affect as potentially impacting each other in either direction, whether in the form of mutual congruence or of dynamic tension – contrary to any model that would posit one of these terms as ultimately primary in accounting for the other. I clarify the theoretical-political import of the proposed model for theorizing the relationship between emotion and discourse by way of contrast with Margaret Wetherell's concept of affective-discursive practice (2012; 2015), which – as I argue – subordinates affect to discourse in an assimilatory, ultimately identitarian fashion by way of reducing it to a discursive/performative practice. By reference to "double-edged thinking" as practiced by Butler (2004b, 129), I detail how the model I develop can do justice to the saturation of both discourse and affect with (bio-) power, providing us with a critical, politicized notion of these terms. This is fruitful, as I conclude, for an egalitarian, feminist, intersectional theory as much as for a practical politics of emotion.

4   Normalization/Normativity

To think difference without either hypostatizing or downplaying it could mean thinking relationality in terms of *connection and tension at once*, then, rather than accentuating connection one-sidedly – to the detriment of differentiation or even contrast. The latter alternative would ultimately amount to *suppressing conflict*, whether in the form of (logical) contradiction or (social) antagonism. The risk of suppressing conflict should move us to appreciate the fact that distinctions (or, put in other words, *categories*) as such are emphatically not 'the enemy'.

We must not be phobic, and have no reason to be phobic or averse, to identifying differences between fundamental theoretical terms which form counterparts to each other. On the contrary: *collapsing difference* (such as when 'discourse' becomes indistinguishable from 'materiality', as tends to occur in agential realism [chapters 1 and 2]) *is antithetical to relational thinking*. For, to speak of a 'relationship' in any meaningful way in fact presupposes that the terms being related to one another are *mutually distinct*, much as they may be mutually connected *at the same time* (see also Gunnarsson 2013, 14). What we should problematize is not, then, the distinctness of terms, that is, the assertion of differences between, for instance, 'materiality' and 'discourse' or 'discourse' and 'affect'. What matters instead for a counter-hegemonic theoretical politics is precisely *how* we construe such terms to differ from – and to relate to – one another.

The notion of a chiasm or crossing, a crosscurrent, in terms of which I construe the difference/relationship between 'affect' and 'discourse' in chapter 3, has appeal in that it enables us to envisage theoretical terms as at once distinct and mutually implicated – in other words, as neither entirely separable nor therefore 'the same'. It enables us to allow room, in critical theorizing, for contradistinction, discrepancy, and conflict without sacrificing relational thinking (a fundamental of feminist, antiracist and other theories critiquing unequal power *relations*). The notion of a chiasm is, however, only one amongst a number of concepts that hold promise for a pursuit of the line of theorizing which I seek to promote as best suited to moving beyond dualism, understood as complicit with social relations of domination – namely, a line of theorizing that, while it is not necessarily *identified* with deconstruction, is certainly inflected by it, and of which I see Butler and Spivak as the most able practitioners. Such theorizing is profoundly relational in a manner that highlights, and respects, distinction as much as connection in the manner in which relationality is approached: in terms of tension, ambiguity (or the "double-edged" [Butler, see above]), and even conflict.

Theorizing that is critical of inequality must in fact be maximally attentive to conflict if it is to steer clear as much as possible of obscuring

unequal relations of power. Put the other way round: Counteracting complicities of our own theorizing with relations of domination requires us to render power relations maximally apparent. And this task is advanced by an attention to conflict: namely, to the extent that inequality breeds conflict, if it *is* not actually a form of conflict. To suppress or obscure conflict effectively is to risk furthering social inequality (if "only" by obscuring it in turn).

A further concept, which is more prominent in Butler's work than the figure of the chiasm, is particularly suited to analyzing relations of power and inequality; in that (amongst the possible forms of conflict or tension) it brings processes of *exclusion* to the fore. This is the concept of a constitutive outside. While it will figure in my analyses of other dualities in the earlier chapters, in chapter 4 this concept takes center stage. Here I deepen my earlier discussion of (bio-) power in chapter 3, where this term comes into play in relation to discourse as well as affect. In chapter 4, I consider Foucault's work along with certain diagnoses of the present which follow in its steps, within and beyond queer theory, as developed in German. Just as the figure of a chiasm is productive for thinking difference relationally and, at the same time, in terms of tensions, so the notion of a constitutive outside enables us – specifically with a view to power – to think exclusion and inclusion, 'outside' and 'inside', 'positive' and 'negative' dimensions of power as interconnected, rather than rendering one of these dimensions invisible while focusing upon the other one, thereby dissociating the two. This forms my project in chapter 4.

The central conceptual dyad which I will consider here consists in the distinction, drawn by Foucault at one point in his work, between *normativity* and *normalization*. In this case, I thus complement my focus, in all other chapters, upon conceptual pairs that form the stuff of classical dualism through a rather recent addition to the list. What motivates my choice of the particular conceptual counterparts I focus upon in this book is, in each case, the significant role they play within recent work in Cultural Studies and its vicinity. Since, however, a use of the term 'normalization' in contradistinction from the term 'normativity' – as developed in Foucault's later work and

within the pertinent German-language literature – is less common in the Anglophone world, at least within queer theory, below I spend some time introducing my discussion in chapter 4.

It is virtually commonplace to state that Foucault, and many of those drawing upon his work, criticize a juridical, negative conception of power and analyze power in ways more attuned to its productivity. This project can, however, be exaggerated in such a way that power's productive side is emphasized one-sidedly, to the detriment of its exclusionary and constraining effects. The tenor of my argument in chapter 4 is that to focus one-sidedly upon power's 'positive' and 'flexible' modes of operation is – considered from an intersectional perspective – to risk emphasizing the ways in which it operates for the more privileged amongst us while 'forgetting' its effects for those at the social margins. By contrast, to analyze power in terms of the concept of a constitutive outside is to do so in strictly relational terms. It is to consider social exclusion *constitutive* of the manner in which power may well operate for many subjects in the present, as has been widely argued (if with implicit reference to the global North only): by way of *in*cluding them within a normality which for the last several decades has been shaped by the neoliberal injunction for subjects 'positively' to construct themselves in line with the notions of optimization and self-responsibility. For subjects positioned at least ambiguously with a view to gender, race, sexuality and/or in that – for instance – they undergo psychiatric treatment, are unemployed long-term, or confined in a refugee camp, 'neoliberalism' can mean finding oneself addressed, not merely (if at all) by the said injunction, but (at least simultaneously) by a biopolitical interpellation that would question whether you are a subject who is actually *capable* of living up to that injunction. If we do not see this but instead focus only on power's effects for the more privileged – and if (in the worst case) we theorize power as such based only on how it makes itself known, and felt, to these – then we risk *reinforcing* the inequality of power's differential operation for differently situated subjects. We risk reinforcing, as I argue in chapter 4, subalternity by obscuring the negativity or rigidity of power at the level of our analysis and theorization of the social. I see this risk as given in the context of

some recent diagnoses of the present. It can be traced back to Foucault's own work, upon which they draw. This is why I spend a good part of the chapter with a close reading of his *Security, Territory, Population* and *The Birth of Biopolitics* – those of Foucault's lecture series at the Collège de France which instantiate this risk most clearly (Foucault 2007; 2010).

The distinction between the terms 'normativity' and 'normalization' is closely related to the better-known distinction between discipline and governmentality. Whereas in *Discipline and Punish* (Foucault 1991), Foucault tended to use the terms 'normalizing' and 'normative' interchangeably, in *Security, Territory, Population* he proposed a fundamental distinction between 'normalization' and 'normativity' (though only at one specific point [Foucault 2007, 55–63], of which much has been made in some publications in German, however). While in Foucault's earlier, synonymous usage of the terms 'normative' and 'normalizing', *both* these terms were closely associated with disciplinary power and, as such, with a deployment of norms, 'normalization' in Foucault's later usage is characterized – in contrast with 'normativity' (a juridical technology of power) as well as 'normation' (a disciplinary technology of power) – as *operating essentially in a manner other than through norms*. As such, Foucault now redefined normalization as operating along the lines of apparatuses of security (*dispositifs*), governmentality and neoliberalism.

Normalization in this new sense may involve norms, too, but these are developed on the basis of statistical *de*scription. Rather than being defined from the very first by norms that operate *pre*scriptively, the normal here is to be understood, in the first place, as a matter of demographic distribution; as *statistical* normality, rather than as a matter of evaluation, or devaluation, in terms of norms (Foucault 2007, 56–63; see also Amir/Kotef 2018). As such normalization is flexible and inclusive rather than binary as well as exclusionary (cf. Foucault 2007, 6, 46–49, 56–63; see also Foucault 2010, 259–260), as in the opposition normal/abnormal which underpins normation.

My close reading of Foucault in chapter 4 critiques the Foucauldian narrative – within and beyond his own work – whereby neoliberalism operates largely without relying on norms or prescription. It critiques

Foucault's implicit representation of statistical techniques (the basis of governmentality, as defined by apparatuses of security [*dispositifs*]) as descriptive in the sense that they are free of normative evaluation and devaluation. Contrary to this narrative, I argue that even a statistical notion of 'the normal' as an average or a range of numerical distribution is not devoid of evaluation and (therefore) implicit prescription. Drawing upon Butler's account of how norms operate, I point out that a hierarchical distinction from the 'abnormal' is constitutive of *any possible notion* of the 'normal', however much such notions may parade as 'merely empirical'. Foucault's implicit juxtaposition of evaluation to description, which (as I demonstrate in chapter 4) underpins the difference he outlines between disciplinary power and neoliberalism, between normation and normalization has the consequence of obfuscating *unequal* relations of power. In fact he explicitly disputed that neoliberalism relies upon social exclusion (Foucault 2010, 259; see also Foucault 2010, 227–229 and – for further detail – chapter 4 below). This is what renders his account of neoliberalism unproductive and deeply problematic from an intersectional perspective – unless it is supplemented by a more critical, expanded understanding of normativity.

I argue that such an understanding is offered by Butler. Contrary to readings of Butler that construe her account of norms, and of power more generally, as predominantly negative, (gendered) norms according to her operate *at once* productively and restrictively. Thus 'sex' is to be understood *as* a norm "which *qualifies a body for life* within the domain of cultural intelligibility" *on the basis of* abjecting other bodies as unintelligible (Butler 1993, 2; emphasis added). Drawing on this more integrated view of norms as cutting both ways – as constituting subjects based upon processes of abjection, i.e. upon constitutive exclusion – I propose to conceive of normativity much more widely than did Foucault: not as a specifically juridical, negative modality of power to be *opposed* to positive modalities of power (see above) but as the dimension of evaluation (i.e. the value-laden and implicitly prescriptive dimension) which frames any possible discourse, and any technology of power, inescapably. Further, I propose to conceive of neoliberalism

as deploying techniques of normalization and normation *in tandem* and as *each equally normative*. Neoliberal normalization as a technology of power describes the ways power is encountered and undergone predominantly by those who manage to pass for (more or less) 'normal'. Normalization is normative in that it is the devaluing notion of the 'abnormal', the specter of being ('found' to be) abnormal, that incites subjects to seek to pass for normal, in the first place – even as not everyone succeeds in doing so. Normation is hence the other side of the coin; both technologies of power must be viewed as being *constitutively interrelated* from an intersectional point of view, and as a form of biopolitics: 'Normation' refers to how those less successful in this collective movement of differentiation from the 'abnormal' – those 'found' to *embody* the abnormal – undergo and encounter power, even if they simultaneously find themselves exposed to the *normalizing* injunction to optimize themselves. 'Normation' thus refers to the processes of exclusion (abjection) which form normalization's constitutive outside; its enabling frame. Normalization must not, then, be juxtaposed to normation, nor to normativity, as if qua specifically *neoliberal* technology of power it could exist independently of either normation qua *disciplinary* technology of power, or as if it were essentially post-normative.

As chapter 4 concludes, based upon the analysis sketched above, it is untenable to picture neoliberal normalization as a flexible rather than binary, and an inclusive rather than exclusionary *alternative* to disciplinary (or juridical) modalities of power. For, normalization operates in conjunction with normation on the basis of an ultimately binary normative matrix which continues to juxtapose 'normal' to 'abnormal' (see also Amir/Kotef 2018, 249). My proposal for reframing the relationship between, and hence the meaning of, the terms 'normativity', 'normation' and 'normalization' remedies the false opposition between statistical, i.e. empirical description and normative prescription established by Foucault in his later work. This opposition is implicitly at work wherever neoliberal normalization is situated outside normation and/or normativity – as a separate, free-standing technology of power which forms their post-normative other. Much

as in Foucault's own later work, in the German-language literature referring to Foucault this occurs in a form such that normalization qua neoliberal technology of power is said to have tended to replace, or to render politically less significant, modalities of power that would operate in exclusionary ways based upon stigmatizing, binary norms which divide the 'normal' from the 'abnormal'. In this context normalization has been opposed to normativity in the sense of two mutually independent technologies of power while Foucault's third term, normation, has been virtually ignored (Ludwig 2016b; Bargetz/ Ludwig 2015; Engel 2002) – hence the title of chapter 4. Such diagnoses are to an extent euphemistic, since in accentuating only or primarily the inclusive and productive face of how power operates in the present, they obscure its exclusionary and repressive face.

In the Anglophone world, a few recent interventions into queer theory have involved a comparable move when it comes to accentuating positive-productive dimensions of power conceptually, whilst dissociating these from power's negative (exclusionary) dimensions in my assessment: Annamarie Jagose, Robyn Wiegman and Elizabeth A. Wilson have charged that to read *norms* as operating primarily negatively, in a restrictive and exclusionary manner, as has occurred in much of queer theory according to them, is to reinstate a version of the 'repressive hypothesis' as problematized by Foucault (Foucault 1990; Jagose 2015; Wiegman/Wilson 2015). In my view, these writers risk using this charge as a springboard for leaping in the very opposite direction, of privileging norms' inclusionary and generative effects – thereby dissociating the productive and the repressive sides of norms, and of power, from each other in what remains a somewhat dualistic pattern, rather than working towards their mutual theoretical integration. I agree, however, with the view that much queer theory has advanced a primarily negative construction of norms as *policing*, *stigmatizing*, and *pathologizing* those disqualified as 'abnormal' sexually or in gendered terms. In fact, within English-language queer theory, the terms 'normativity' and 'normalization' (or 'normative'/'normalizing') have been used at least by some more approximately as synonyms or closely associated terms,

whose difference from one another seems hard to pin down, than as oppositions (Berlant/Warner 1998, 552–553, 557; Hall/Jagose 2013, xvi; Wiegman/Wilson 2015, 7, 10, 18). Such use of these terms to indicate a predominantly negative conception of norms pertaining especially to sexuality and gender contrasts with the opposition between the same terms which has been constructed in German-language publications, as briefly sketched above. At the same time it contrasts with Foucault's own conception of disciplinary power as "at-once prohibitive *and productive*" (Jagose 2015, 39; emphasis added) – from which Foucault would distinguish a more exclusively productive version of power slightly later, in his lectures on governmentality and neoliberalism (Foucault 2007; 2010; see above). (Jagose, Wiegman and Wilson do not reference Foucault's work on neoliberalism and governmentality but cite solely *The History of Sexuality*, Volume 1 [1990].) It is the potential of Foucault's earlier analysis of disciplinary power for developing a *double-edged* notion of power as well as norms – as it comes to fuller fruition in Butler's work – that chapter 4 highlights, contrary to readings of Foucault and/or Butler that would compartmentalize their respective theoretical contributions in terms of a dichotomy between productive vs. negative views of power (Jagose 2015). (While Butler's account of norms may be at risk of being read as predominantly negative due to its emphasis upon exclusion, this would thwart its potential of doing justice to, and of mutually articulating, both sides of power – productive and harmful, even annihilating – as *interdependent*.)

In the (queer-theoretical) reception of Foucault (and Butler) in different languages, then, the terms 'normativity' and 'normalization', or 'normative' and 'normalizing', have been construed alternatively as mutually exclusive *or* as close to synonymous. (Each of these uses of the two terms can be read as drawing upon different phases in Foucault's work, respectively: his analyses of disciplinary power versus governmentality.) This phenomenon resonates with the one identified by Gunnarsson regarding debates on intersectionality (see above), in that a meta-dualism seems to be at work in virtue of which different writers highlight *either* 'identity' *or* 'difference' in their use of the conceptual pair 'normalization/normativity' – with the effect, in this

case, that *positive-formative and negative-exclusionary dimensions of power are dichotomized against one another*. In post-Foucauldian (as well as Foucault's own later) theorizing too, then, we encounter a certain dualistic 'either/or-ism'. It is this overall tendency towards splitting – which takes different forms in Germany/Austria than it does in the Anglophone context – that I ultimately wish to critique in chapter 4. On both sides of this conceptual divide, however, Foucault's work is idealized and shielded from critique, as I argue – a somewhat one-sided approach to what I assess as an ambiguous tone on his part when it comes to neoliberalism's political 'innovations'.

To analyze power either as primarily 'productive' *or* 'negative', 'flexible' *or* 'rigid' (a terminology more common in German-language settings) is mutually to dissociate its *differential* operation for differentiated categories of subjects. This amounts to an unrelational perspective, and one which obviously privileges either dimension of power at the cost of the other. Either of the above one-sided versions of 'power', whether predominantly 'negativist' or 'productivist', amount to producing (yet again) a hierarchical opposition, if only implicitly: in conceptual rather than purely normative terms. They do so in the sense of producing an epistemic bias which renders invisible the fact that *power is encountered and undergone differently depending* in part *upon subjects' social positionality*. My own proposal for a theorization of the relationship between the terms 'normalization', 'normation' and 'normativity' (previewed above) – drawing as it does upon Butler's account of norms – offers an alternative to the polarized construction of norms, and of power, as *either* primarily positive *or* primarily negative; contrary to any reading of Butler that would see her as privileging a negative notion of norms as well as power in line with the 'repressive hypothesis' (Jagose 2015). On my reading, the concept of a constitutive outside as employed by Butler works against such polarization through its rigorously relational emphasis, which forces us to consider the negativities that circumscribe power's productive effects without understating the latter. Theorizing exclusion as constitutive of all social inclusion is to conceive of 'outside' and 'inside', not as separate (as in a binary opposition), but as inseparably intertwined, yet distinct

and even contrary in its effects for differently positioned categories of subjects.

In contrast, situating neoliberal normalization outside normativity by dissociating it from disciplinary normation (as occurs in the German-language diagnoses of the present discussed in chapter 4) is to dissociate the social inclusion of the more privileged from the exclusion/abjection of everyone else. This amounts to obscuring, and therefore in a sense to reproducing, the violence of social exclusion. At the same time, the alternative of diluting all difference between normalization and normativity, while connoting both terms negatively, i.e. with power's negative dimensions (as has occurred in English-language queer theory), not only risks overlooking how power – and normativity – is implicated in even the most seemingly 'autonomous' or 'transgressive' practices (as Wiegman and Wilson point out [2015]) (see also below). Which would be, likewise, to understate the extent to which power saturates social relations. It is also specifically to understate the *inequality* of power's differential operation for different subjects. What allows us to move beyond either of these alternatives, and their respective complicity with unegalitarian social arrangements, is to posit a *tension* between the 'positive' and 'negative' faces of power whilst recognizing their interconnection. This will contribute to rendering social inequality and its violence maximally apparent.

5   Negativity/Affirmation

In my introduction to this book so far, I have problematized hierarchical thinking as potentially complicit with unegalitarian social orders. But the reflections pursued in chapters 1 through 4 beg a question which is politically decisive: If, as I argue, both classically dualistic thinking and its identitarian counterpart can be complicit with inequality to the extent that they are hierarchizing, does this mean that *any* conceptual/normative hierarchy is per se unegalitarian? The earlier chapters in this book leave open this question. This is acceptable because they each focus upon a specific hierarchical opposition in progressive theorizing which *does* contribute to sustaining social

inequality. In the book's final chapter, chapter 5, however, the above question is addressed head-on.

Doing so is all the more important given my position, developed in chapter 4, that all discourse is inherently normative (see above). In other words, a *non*-normative discourse is impossible. But where does this leave critical and progressively oriented theorizing? Is all theorizing necessarily complicit with social inequality? These are the larger questions which form the backdrop to chapter 5. If the latter question is answered in the negative – as it must be if there is to be any notion of a counter-hegemonic discourse – then we need to ask how we can distinguish hegemonic forms of *normativity* from counter-hegemonic ones: If it is possible to envisage a counter-hegemonic kind of normativity, then what qualifies it as counter-hegemonic? Would such a form of normativity be non-hierarchizing? Or how else can we conceive of an egalitarian, critical normativity?

I take the view that normativity (i.e. all discourse) is intrinsically hierarchizing, but not therefore necessarily unegalitarian. Normativity is per se hierarchizing only *in a certain sense*: in the sense that the evaluative dimension of any discourse entails a *value* hierarchy; a distinction between better and worse, important and less important. (Whether it be as a matter of overt evaluation or of what value judgments are implicit in the kinds of conceptual prioritization, the epistemic – and hence, perceptual – biases entailed in a given conceptual architecture, as argued with a view to some of the hierarchical oppositions considered in this book.) It is necessary to distinguish, then, between the hierarchizing character of normativity as such, on the one hand, and thought that is hierarchizing in the sense that it is unegalitarian, on the other (in its ultimate trajectory if not in intention). This raises the further question: What could a counter-hegemonic form of (normative/conceptual) hierarchization possibly look like?

The above questions and my answers to them are threaded through this book's final chapter, but are not treated in the abstract. Rather, I negotiate them in the context of yet another conceptual dyad: negativity vs. affirmation. This dyad is not approached directly, however, but

via the relationship between unhappiness and happiness; affects that
are closely related to these respective orientations. If in chapter 4,
normativity is considered critically, in terms of how a hegemonic
normativity sustains inequality, in chapter 5 normativity comes into
play in a more affirmative sense: Here I am in search of a *normative style*
that would encompass both negativity and affirmation, and that would
relate both to one another in a non-dualistic fashion. We will find that
how we orient to happiness and to unhappiness, respectively (negatively
and/or affirmatively) – and how we frame these feelings' relationship to
one another (dualistically or as potentially contiguous, yet in tension) –
is important to this search.

Specifically, chapter 5 concludes this book with what I intend to
be a tribute to Ahmed's work on happiness (2007; 2010). I can critique
her work as sternly, as engagedly as I do only because it has guided
my thinking on this subject so decisively; because in my estimation it
comes so close to 'getting it right'. It is, in other words, in good part
from Ahmed's own insights that I draw the means of critiquing Ahmed
at those points where I find certain ambiguities in her work to reach the
point of contradiction – a contradiction from which I feel that there is
still more to learn. And it is from the example provided by Ahmed's
treatment of happiness and unhappiness that I glean the criteria by
which I propose to distinguish a *counter-hegemonic normative style* from
a hegemonic one.

The chapter offers a close reading of Ahmed's work on happiness,
with *The Promise of Happiness* (Ahmed 2010) placed center stage. I identify
a tension, even a contradiction between her critique of *hegemonic*
framings of 'happiness' and her tendency to reject happiness *as such*,
however understood: Ahmed's critique of hegemonic framings of
happiness – to the effect that these result in social exclusion and
a devaluation of the unhappy – is unintelligible in its critical force
except when happiness per se is avowed as desirable. Otherwise, there
could be nothing objectionable about the unequal social distribution
of un-/happiness, as critiqued by her. Whereas Ahmed's rejection of
happiness amounts to a reverse discourse in my assessment, there are
other moments in her theorizing in which she offers an affirmative,

alternative framing of the term. It is in a non-dualistic framing of happiness and unhappiness, which refuses to dismiss *either* of these emotions, that her account is most consequently egalitarian (that is, critical of social exclusion).

I maintain, furthermore, that the competing strands of Ahmed's argument exemplify differing normative styles – one mimicking a hegemonic normativity, the other instantiating an alternative, queer normativity. I contest the notion of queer "antinormativity", which styles queer theory as normatively innocent (Wiegman/Wilson 2015): Far from being value-neutral or non-hierarchizing, queer theory too participates in promoting normative priorities. At its best, however, a queer normative style is *non-normalizing*. Instead of reifying value hierarchies, it denaturalizes attributions of value in an egalitarian spirit. It is most in line with this spirit when Ahmed, at some points in her writing, reclaims happiness by offering an alternative, counter-hegemonic framing of what it might mean to be affected positively. Happiness as such cannot be rejected wholeheartedly, I insist. For, it is implicitly being affirmed as desirable in any impulse to escape suffering, in all political struggle, and in the very hope for change.

In this book's final chapter, then, I seek to advance an orientation (theoretical as much as practical) that avows ambiguity (see also Pedwell 2014; Stacey 2014): I emphasize the political potential of allowing for contiguity between happiness and unhappiness without conceptually collapsing the tension between these emotions into a pseudo-harmony that would suppress conflict between them. (Here I take my cue from Ahmed's exemplary challenge: her call on us to open up to, even to *bear*, unhappiness' interference with happiness.) Contrary to Ahmed as I read her, however, I ask that neither of these emotions be hierarchized over and against the other in a fashion that would suppress ambiguity by splitting it into an affirmation of the one state vs. a rejection of the other: If affirming happiness must not be allowed to tilt over into a negation of unhappiness, neither must we give preference to unhappiness (as if that were at all possible). For either move would be *unegalitarian* in effect, as I argue in chapter 5. Instead, I make the case for orienting to each of these emotions in a way that entails

moments of negativity *as well as* affirmation. This chapter foregrounds contiguity and simultaneity, then, not in the sense of pure continuity, of a fusion that would blur boundaries to the point of negating them, but (once again) in terms of a double-edged and even tense or conflicted relationship.

For, as I argue throughout this book, when it comes to dualism and the assimilatory, ultimately identitarian response to it which I critique, it is by allowing for ambiguity and tension that we are better equipped for reducing theory's complicities with hegemonic, unegalitarian orders. We need to find alternatives to the meta-dualism of privileging *either* difference *or* affinity (Gunnarsson; see above) *because both of these alternatives tend to further unegalitarian tendencies*. Qua corollary of the kind of deconstructively inclined social thought which I view as best suited to moving beyond such tendencies, affirming ambiguity and tension as a way of affirming relationality requires us also to take contradictions – such as the contradiction which I trace in Ahmed's work on happiness – seriously rather than dismissing or diluting their significance. We thus need to recognize contradictions as problems, as a reason for transforming (theory) further (Butler 2012b; Coole 2000). Only if we do so can we truly take others seriously – and even ourselves; our own writing.

With chapters 4 and 5, I broach the subject of normativity and antinormativity announced in the title of this book, as its third central subject alongside 'matter' and 'affect'. In concluding this volume, I contest a certain, often unspoken premise of queer theory to the effect that if hegemonic normativity is politically problematic, our response should be to abstain from normativity as such – as if that were at all possible. In my view, this amounts to a misunderstanding of self; a misunderstanding of one's own interventions as *non*-normative, which only serves to cover up the 'will to power'; the inextricable connection between knowledge and power (as asserted by Foucault [1980]).[3] As such

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3   Foucault's insistence that there is no knowledge outside power is contradicted in my assessment by the uncritical opposition between statistical vs. normative

it is a politically consequential fallacy: It produces *unacknowledged* effects of power.

It is such (often) tacit premises of theoretical discourse – the notion that it is possible to rid one's own discourse of normativity; the understanding of dualism as an assertion of differences best transcended by contesting boundaries as such – that I seek to question and thus to open up for collective reflection, in the hope that this will contribute to advancing critical discourses in Cultural Studies and (post-) poststructuralism by way of clarifying – and, where necessary, changing – their conceptual, normative, and political thrust.

I seek to intervene, then, in what remains *un*debated and unquestioned in these fields, or is at least not debated enough: in what remains (too) taken for granted. I do so with the goal of contributing to rendering theory in these fields not only more consequently self-reflexive, but also more consequently (or 'radically') egalitarian. It is in what remains unthought, in what we could refer to as theory's 'unconscious' that we are most likely to remain complicit with hegemonic discourses precisely because this happens inadvertently.

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knowledge which underwrites his juxtaposition of governmentality vs. disciplinary power (see above and chapter 4).