3 Affect/Discourse
A Chiastic Relationship
On Judith Butler, Margaret Wetherell, and the Affective Turn

Introduction: Why theorize feeling?[1]

A turn to affect has been highly necessary for poststructuralist theory and Cultural Studies. Until the beginnings of the affective turn, the notion of 'discourse', as deployed by Michel Foucault and others, tended to be used in a way that isolated it from emotions, that is, in a rationalist and – thus – a reductive form (see, e.g., Foucault 1972; Macdonnell 1986; Fairclough 1989; Wetherell/Potter 1992). In effect, if not in intention, the widespread theoretical isolation of discourses from emotions reinscribed the hierarchical opposition between reason and emotion which has been central among the set of hierarchical oppositions constitutive of what, during the 1990s, was referred to as modern or 'Enlightenment' discourse (see, e.g., Hulme/Jordanova 1990; Gilroy 1993). In fact, the opposition 'discourse/affect', which forms a poststructuralist variant of the opposition 'reason/emotion', tended to be neglected in feminist, postcolonial and other critical scholarly projects which otherwise aimed to deconstruct hierarchical oppositions that are implicated in gendered, racialized and other inequalities (see,

1 As explained further below in the main text, I use the terms 'feeling', 'affect' and 'emotion' synonymously, contrary to recent convention.

e.g., Spivak 1988a, 1990; Bhabha 1994). The turn to affect has been a necessary consequence drawn from the latent rationalism of earlier poststructuralisms, as entailed in their cognitive reductionism.

Without a focus on emotions, the call – and the desire – for political change is in fact less than fully intelligible: If social inequality, and the discursive hierarchies which serve to sustain it, did not tend to produce suffering or some sort of emotional discomfort, then why should anyone bother to seek political change? This question clarifies why politicized scholarly inquiry into 'discourse' makes it necessary to theorize feeling at the same time: Early theorizations of discourse influenced by poststructuralism, for all their critical impetus, were unable to provide an answer to it. They lacked a theoretical vocabulary for addressing the *emotional costs* of unegalitarian discourses and modes of social organization.[2]

But has the affective turn moved us beyond the dualism of discourse vs. feeling? Has it fully taken account of what I construe as the major reason why a turn to affect has been necessary for poststructuralism – namely, the need to move beyond that dualism? In this chapter, I argue that some of the main trends in theorizing feeling have, on the contrary, reproduced this dualism – in forms that remain hierarchizing and, thus, continue to be complicit with unegalitarian politics. This applies equally to rationalist, cognitively reductionist notions of emotion,

2 I adapt the notion that subordination and exclusion are emotionally costly to those negatively affected thereby from Arlie Russell Hochschild's similar argument, according to which *emotional labor*, as demanded by corporations from their workforce (such as the flight attendants whose labor conditions and emotional strategies she examined), generates "human costs" or "psychological costs", as she puts it (2003, 186–187). Whereas Hochschild's analysis of these costs relies upon the problematic, essentialist notion of "estrangement" (2003, 37), I am suggesting that social subordination and exclusion are *emotionally* costly in that they tend to generate suffering or at least some sense of affective discomfort. See also note 15 to this chapter.
Heather Love similarly emphasizes the costs of social exclusion and denigration in a way which seems to link to her emphasis on "feelings such as grief, regret, and despair" (2007b, 163).

which tend to reduce the latter to their discursive dimension (e.g. Nussbaum 2001; Reddy 2001; Illouz 2008; Wetherell 2012, 2015; McAvoy 2015; Leys 2017) – thus subordinating emotion to discourse – *and* to notions of affect which, on the contrary, celebrate affect as the Other of discourse, whilst privileging it vis-à-vis the latter category (e.g. Thrift 2008; Massumi 2002). I argue that a feminist, antiracist and, generally, egalitarian politics of emotion needs to move beyond this impasse rather than positioning itself *within* either theoretical camp (see also Fischer 2016).

This chapter makes one proposal for how to conceive of the relationship between feeling and discourse in non-hierarchizing fashion, namely, in terms of the rhetorical figure of the chiasm (a crossing). This figure has been invoked repeatedly by Judith Butler – even though she barely discusses its significance explicitly – in ways that begin to move beyond dualism (understood as an absolutist, non-relational rendering of difference) and beyond identitarian thinking (understood as an assimilationist erasure of difference) at once. For instance, Butler has theorized the relationship between discourse or language and the body, between passivity and activity, and (drawing upon Maurice Merleau-Ponty's philosophy) between subject and object as well as feeling and knowing as chiastic; as involving constitutive ties or transitions between the terms making up each of these conceptual pairs, yet without identifying the respective oppositional terms with each other (Butler 2015a, 178–180; 2015b, 14–22, 41–62, 155–170). The figure of the chiasm has much affinity with the feminist notion of intersectionality, but I consider it to be a potentially useful model for thinking difference and relationality together, more generally.

Unlike Butler, however, I will highlight the potential for tension entailed in the figure of the chiasm, more than a blurring of contrary terms into each other, as she tends to do. I do so in the interest of moving beyond hierarchical thinking, to which Butler's theorization of the relationship between feeling and knowing remains indebted in my view (2015b, 41–62; see also Butler 2015b, 155–170). (I would argue that her analysis here risks an identitarian assimilation of thinking to feeling, which privileges the second term as primary [compare note 5

to this chapter].) I thus wish respectfully to tap the potential for non-hierarchizing thinking which I view as being entailed in the notion of a chiasm, as elucidated by Butler at other points in her work (Butler 2015a, 120–121, 178–180; 2015b, 14–22). In drawing upon these, and further, productive moments of her theorizing as a way of framing the relationship between emotions and discourse – and how power bears upon it – I hope to begin to emulate "double-edged thinking" (Butler 2004b, 129), as commendably practiced by Butler herself in many parts of her writing. This account supplements and modifies my earlier attempt to think emotions along Butlerian lines (Braunmühl 2012b).

In what follows, I begin by critiquing the reductive tendencies in existing research on emotions which I have problematized above. Then I outline what it might mean to conceptualize the relationship between discourse and affect as chiastic. Next, I discuss how power might most fruitfully be understood in relation to these terms, so as to arrive at a politicized, critical, theoretically grounded account of discourse and its relationship to emotions. I make this proposal by way of contrast with Margaret Wetherell's account of affective-discursive practice (2015; 2012) – which, as I argue, subordinates affect to discourse whilst deploying a notion of discourse that is insufficiently critical. In concluding, I briefly consider from a feminist perspective the political implications of the alternative proposal made in this chapter, in both theoretical and practical terms.

Two opposing, but equally reductive, trends in recent theorizations of feeling

Affect theory has been critiqued widely for opposing affect to emotion in a manner that ultimately replicates the dualism of body vs. mind (Leys 2017; Wetherell 2015; McAvoy 2015; Barnett 2008), as associated with categories such as 'discourse' and 'the social'. Thus Clare Hemmings has written, commenting upon the work of Brian Massumi (2002) and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (2003):

> "My critical response to Massumi and Sedgwick's work on affect, then, is not one that rejects the importance of affect for cultural theory. It is one that rejects the contemporary fascination with affect as outside social meaning, as providing a break in both the social and in critics' engagements with the nature of the social. The problems in Massumi and Sedgwick discussed in this article do not require a wholesale rejection of affect's relevance to cultural theory. Instead, affect might in fact be valuable precisely to the extent that it is not autonomous" (Hemmings 2005, 564–565).

As Clive Barnett asserts with reference to Nigel Thrift's 'non-representational theory' and other post-foundational approaches which proceed "in terms of 'layer-cake' ontologies of practice" – where "[a]ffect is presented as an ontological layer of embodied existence" that is "layered below the level of minded, intentional consciousness" (2008, 188): "there is a tendency to simply assert the conceptual priority of previously denigrated terms – affect over reason, practice over representation" (Barnett 2008, 188). The problem, then, is that in the work of writers such as Massumi and Thrift, affect remains the Other of discourse and is conceived of in terms of a normative hierarchy – albeit one inverted relative to modern convention, with affect at the top and reason or discourse positioned as its maligned antagonist. For instance, Thrift writes in *Non-Representational Theory* that much of the interest in the role of affect in politics manifested in the existing literature, including feminist literature, on politics "has been bedevilled by the view that politics ought to be about conscious, rational discourse with the result that affect is regarded as at best an add-on and as at worst a dangerous distraction" (2008, 248). But Thrift in *Non-Representational Theory* inverts the very normative arrangement which he imputes to such work into its plain opposite, into a mere mirror image of what he is critiquing: He frames politics as being essentially about 'affect', with 'conscious, rational discourse' relegated to the role of mere add-on. What is missing here is any sense of how affect and discourse might *complicate one another*; any *relational* account of these terms.

However, rather than moving beyond this dissatisfactory state of affairs towards a truly relational account of discourse and feeling, some of those who critique affect theory in these terms tend, for their part, to invert the above trend in a way that over-identifies emotions with discourse, subordinating the former to the latter by reducing feelings to their discursive dimension.[3] They thereby continue the modern or 'Enlightenment' convention of subordinating emotions to reason or discourse, that is, to cognition – albeit in a variant which renders emotions as a *dimension* of cognition rather than as its Other. In what is perhaps the most extreme example of this tendency, which must be characterized as identitarian, Ruth Leys asserts – presumably, but not explicitly with reference to the *psychological* research of affect, in particular – that "in the field of emotion research there is no intellectually viable alternative to [Alan J.] Fridlund's position" (2017, 368).[4] This position, according to Leys, holds "that emotions are conceptual through and through" (2017, 275). In fact, Fridlund is agnostic on the question of *whether there are emotions* at all (Leys 2017, 361–362, 275–276). Accordingly, his research does not concern itself with emotions (2017, 358–368), but instead studies "intentional actions of intact animals" (2017, 363) (including human animals) as inferred from their observable interactions. Leys' endorsement of Fridlund's position therefore seems to amount to endorsing such research as a satisfactory alternative capable of *replacing*, if not the academic study of affect *tout court*, then at least its psychological investigation. It would hardly seem possible to subordinate (by way of assimilating) emotion to cognition

3 An exception to this is J. S. Hutta's contribution to the debate, in which the author states: "Affect, then, not only drives discourse, but discourse also conditions affect" (Hutta 2015, 298). Interestingly, this perspective of both shaping each other *mutually* coincides, in Hutta's article – as it does in this text – with an emphasis on dynamism in the relationship between semiotics or discourse and affect (2015, 304). As I suggest in the main text, this emphasis is allowed for by conceiving of that relationship in *non-hierarchizing* terms.

4 My remarks here pertain solely to how Leys reconstructs Fridlund's position and are intended as a criticism of Leys' text rather than of Fridlund's research itself – which I have not studied independently of its representation by Leys.

in terms more absolute than these, which amount, literally, to *dissolving* the former into the latter.[5]

Martha Nussbaum similarly reduces emotions to value-laden cognitions or "judgments of value" (2001, 19); a position she herself refers to as a "'cognitive-evaluative' view" (2001, 23).[6] William M. Reddy defines emotion in terms of "[t]he constant activation of *thought material* associated with the complex tasks of goal coordination" (2001, 121; emphasis added), where "all such loosely aggregated thought activations [are] considered 'emotions'" (2001, 94; see also Reddy 2001, 321; 2008, 80–81, n. 1). And in my final example of the stated trend in research on emotion – of an identitarian reduction of feeling to its discursive or cognitive dimension – Wetherell (2015; 2012) defines affect in terms of practices which accompany any and all *discursive* practice. By reducing affect to a practice and an accompaniment of discourse, she, too, produces an account which misses the sense in which emotions can

5 See also the critique of Leys (2011) offered by John Cromby and Martin E. H. Willis (2016, 483). These authors, however, in turn invert the hierarchy in favor of cognition which they rightly critique in Leys' work. They do so in virtue of presenting an account of the relationship between 'feeling' and cognition according to which (in line with the philosophies of Alfred North Whitehead and Susanne Langer) 'feeling' is privileged as primary. Their account thus presents the case of an *identitarian* theory of said relationship which tends to assimilate, and to subordinate, discourse to feeling (see esp. 2016, 486) – which in turn is conceptualized in terms that privilege body over mind. This chapter, by contrast, aims to provide a *non-hierarchizing*, even-handed account of the relationship between feeling and discourse. I suggest that in order to move beyond hierarchical thinking, we need to problematize not only dualism but also identitarian, assimilatory versions of such thinking (which, in the case of theorizing the relationship between emotion and discourse, fail to provide for the possibility of tension between these). Cromby and Willis only problematize dualistic versions of such thinking. In line with this, they critique Leys' account as dualistic rather than as identitarian, as I do.

6 Nussbaum (2001) also hypostatizes the intelligibility of emotions to a degree which renders the human subject as potentially fully self-transparent. This rationalist view is incompatible with any notion of the unconscious as irreducible, which informs the theoretical account to be presented in what follows.

disrupt discourses and exceed their logic; the sense in which emotions can even work against the logic of already-constituted discourses, potentially contributing to their transformation. (I will return to this lacuna, and others, in her account further below.)

As long as the study of feelings is shaped by a dichotomy, whereby feeling is *either* over-*identified* with discourse or cognition in a way that ultimately renders it as a quasi-discursive activity *or* is – alternatively – *dissociated* from discourse, we remain faithful in one way or another to variants of the hierarchical opposition of reason or discourse vs. emotion bequeathed to us by modern convention. We do so, *both* when we celebrate affect as the (now-preferred) Other of discourse, *and* when we subordinate it to discourse by reducing it to a dimension of the latter.

The dualistic, hierarchical arrangement of modern discourses has been critiqued extensively for being implicated in gendered, racialized, and further inequalities constitutive of modernity (see chapter 1). The discourse/affect opposition is an indisputable case in point, given how it has served – and continues to serve – to render women, People of Color, and other marginalized or excluded subjects as irrational and, as such, as lesser forms of life. This is why a feminist, intersectional, egalitarian politics cannot rest content with theoretical accounts of feeling which position the latter in a hierarchical relationship to discourse – no matter which of these terms is being privileged over the other: Any such hierarchy will remain gendered and racialized at least by association, and thus, forestalls any truly egalitarian conceptual move beyond hierarchies of race and gender. Due to the historically gendered and racialized dimension of hierarchical arrangements of the conceptual pair of reason/affectivity, in particular, any such arrangement which continues to construct affectivity as the Other of discourse risks reinscribing the connotation of affectivity with racialized and gendered Otherness and vice-versa, over and against 'reason' – even when the conventional hierarchy of 'reason over emotion' is turned on its head in what amounts to a mere reverse discourse. As for the inverse tendency in existing research on emotions to reduce the latter to their discursive dimension, the latent rationalism entailed in this reinscribes

the masculinism of 'Enlightenment' thinking, effacing and thereby implicitly devaluing difference (i.e. what is irreducible about affect, including its nonrational, historically feminized as well as devalued dimension). A feminist, egalitarian politics committed to reducing social inequalities and exclusions – including their affective dimensions (Ahmed 2010; Love 2007b; Hemmings 2005, 561–562) – must therefore trouble both any identitarian *identification* of emotions with discourse which tends to assimilate the former to the latter, and any neat *separation* of both terms. It requires an account of emotion that does justice to *both* the intimate relatedness of these categories *and* the potential for tension between them – that is, to their irreducibility to one another. Only with such an account do we stand a chance of leaving behind the complicity of theory with gendered, racialized, and further inequalities. In order to commit to this goal, it will not do to either equate 'affectivity' with 'reason/rationality' or split these terms apart.

Much (queer-)feminist work on emotion has, in fact, refused either variety of reductionism (see, e.g., Ahmed 2010; Cvetkovich 2012; Love 2007b). However, the conceptualization of emotions which such work has offered is not always very clear with a view to *how*, exactly, to think the relationship between emotions and discourse. In what follows, I propose that the rhetorical figure of the chiasm has much potential for fleshing out how these categories can be conceptualized as being irreducible to each other, while at the same time being mutually implicated.

Discourse/feeling: a chiasm

Feelings according to the theoretical account proposed here are framed by discursive scripts which tend to limit, along with enabling, the spectrum of what can be felt at a given historical moment.[7] These

7 I have previously stated this tendency in terms too absolute (Braunmühl 2012b, 225), thus failing to allow for the notion, developed in this chapter, that "discourses must also be understood as themselves being potentially impinged

scripts – understood in terms of matrices of intelligibility that are formative of the human subject – are highly racialized, gendered and class-specific, assigning diverging norms of affective performance, experience, and mutual response to hierarchically differentiated social groups. Thus, for instance, Sara Ahmed (2014, 86–87) in her analysis of disgust touches, by reference to prior work by Audre Lorde (1984, 147–148), upon how persons of Color have come historically to be associated with 'offensiveness' and the affect of disgust in the racist experience of many 'whites' (see also Hemmings 2005, 561–562). Clearly, disgust – including disgust incited by racist discourses – has a strong bodily, visceral dimension, which thus cannot coherently be dichotomized against its discursive dimension. Similarly, 'white' fear of (young) Black men in the U.S. context is a case in point which illustrates the social, discursive character of even the most visceral dimensions of racialized fear: Such fear is rendered possible only by the social establishment of *discursive* frames which racialize perceptions of danger as associated with other human beings and, specifically, with crime.[8] (Such frames form historically specific conditions of possibility for the very perception of humans in terms of racial categories, in the first place.) Emotion – whether referred to as such or as affect or feeling –

upon by inchoate feelings that are not fully contained by those discourses' own terms of intelligibility" (see main text below). The idea that discourses enable and constrain what can be *felt*, as I have previously formulated it, is adapted from Michel Pêcheux's notion of "*discursive formation*" as being that which "determines '*what can and should be said* […]'" (Pêcheux 1982, 111, emphases in the original; citing Haroche/Henry/Pêcheux 1971, 102). Foucault similarly (and, likewise, in rather structuralist coinage) characterizes the archive in terms of "the law of what can be said" at a given spatio-temporal conjuncture (1972, 129).

8 Hutta (2015, 300) states this point in similar terms. As the author remarks, "conceiving of viscerality as the generative site of affect per se and viewing semiotics as secondary mechanism of capture leads to reductive understandings of both body and language" (2015, 298). As I understand Hutta, such reductionism is characterized by a hierarchical opposition between affect (conceived of as primarily bodily) vs. semiotics or discourse, which the author critiques as much as I do here.

cannot, then, in any of its dimensions be disentangled from discourse when it comes to a subject whose very experience (including bodily experience) is constituted, as I maintain, by the terms provided by discursive frames or matrices of intelligibility. To the extent that this is disregarded, the discursive work that goes into the constitution of *anything* that can be felt or sensed by human subjects will be naturalized – and, thus, will be shielded from query and critical reflection. A *critical* theoretical account of affect/feeling/emotion must acknowledge its power-laden, and hence, its social character. It is in order to highlight the shared discursive dimension of emotion/affect/feeling, their entanglement with power relations, and the inseparability of the bodily aspects from the discursive aspects of this entanglement, that I use the terms 'emotion', 'feeling' and 'affect' interchangeably in this chapter; contrary to recent convention.[9] (I do so with reference exclusively to *human* subjects as discursively constituted beings.) Whether, despite these continuities, it makes sense to draw specific distinctions between the terms 'affect', 'feeling' and 'emotion' can certainly be debated, but is not the subject of this chapter.

The above in no way implies that what is felt can be *reduced* to the purely discursive. It is by recourse to a psychoanalytically inflected, poststructuralist notion of discourse as developed by Butler (amongst others) that we can safeguard a non-reductive account of the affective as exceeding the discursive, in the sense that it exceeds socially already-established matrices of intelligibility (see also Braunmühl 2012b). Due to the close association of affective life with power and its unequal social distribution, it makes much sense to posit – drawing on Butler's work – that the spectrum of discursive frames for emotional experience which is available at a given time and place is circumscribed by what may be termed its *constitutive outside*. As I have explained previously:

> "The term, 'constitutive outside' refers to the fact that any discursive positivity that provides a matrix of intelligibility bases itself in a

9 See, e.g., Massumi (2002); Cromby and Willis (2016). Regarding Cromby's and Willis' article, see also note 5 to this chapter.

> founding exclusion ('abjection') of what cannot be recognized or avowed as intelligible within the terms of that matrix (Butler 2003, 131; 1993, 3, 8, 22). This deconstructive re-signification of 'the unconscious' allows us to conceive of it (or of the psyche) as itself resulting from social/discursive processes, rather than as in any sense pre-discursive and an entity 'unto itself'" (Braunmühl 2012b, 224).[10]

I suggest that discursive scripts tend, on the one hand, to establish the possibility of feeling in particular ways at a given historical time and place – especially in ways that would stabilize hegemonic order, which tend to be biased in favor of legitimizing the social dominance of certain groups. On the other hand, such scripts tend to *abject* other ways of feeling as illegitimate, queer, or plainly inconceivable – particularly feelings which might threaten the persistence of hegemonic order. While, on this account, it is not possible to have feelings that are entirely unrelated to the spectrum of discourses operative at a given time and place, we can conceive of a transitional 'field' *between* what can be fully discursively articulated in a given social context and what can only barely be hinted at, yet which may make itself felt, for instance, in the form of symptoms in the psychoanalytic sense, or in an insistent sense of something missing in one's life, even if it seems barely to be specifiable what this might be. It seems to me that Butler has gestured at such an emergent, transitional 'domain' between what can clearly be stated and what it is impossible to say, when writing of a "critical perspective […] that operates at the limit of the intelligible" (Butler 2004b, 107) as well as (with reference to subjects figured as only barely, if at all legible in terms of the binaries of gendered discourse) of "hybrid regions of [social, C.B.] legitimacy and illegitimacy that have no clear names, and where nomination itself falls into a crisis" (2004b, 108). From such "sites of uncertain ontology", according to Butler, there "[emerges] a questionably audible claim […]: the claim

10 I here elucidate the notion of a constitutive outside as used by Butler. This notion is not exclusive to Butlerian theorizing, however, but has been used more widely within poststructuralist theory.

of the not-yet-subject and the nearly recognizable" (2004b, 108). In line with these allusions to what I understand as the notion of a 'realm' of discursive formation-in-the-making, we can thus posit that feelings may emerge *at the limits of discourse*, as associated with the abject and, ultimately, bordering on discourses' constitutive outside, their 'unconscious' – understood in the Butlerian, deconstructive-discursive terms referenced above. Emotions can then be conceived of as operating in significant part in terms of *unconscious* logics which – as with the notion of a constitutive outside, as deployed by Butler – are fully discursive in character, yet 'move' us in ways that may run up against, subvert, or even contribute to redirecting the logic of prevailing discourses, particularly with a view to the unegalitarian hegemonic norms entailed in these (Butler 1993; see Braunmühl 2012b for further detail).

This view assigns feelings an important role in struggles for political change. For, on the above account, it is partially at the limits of what is not (yet) fully speakable that affective life takes shape. This idea tallies with the notion that unegalitarian social arrangements – that is, being socially subordinated and considered a lesser form of human life than other such forms – occasion *emotional* costs (see above), from which a desire for change, and hence, resistance, may potentially emerge.

The Butlerian move of understanding discourses as being based in founding exclusions (which differ with each specific discursive formation [Butler 2003, 129–131]) offers the opportunity of theoretically tying 'discourse' and 'affect' into each other on the model of a chiasm – as an alternative to reducing either of these terms to the other or opposing them to one another dualistically. Thus, the above account entails that discourses not only offer frames for socially intelligible, legitimated feelings (promoting, eliciting, and positively shaping certain feelings over and against others by normative means) whilst abjecting (discouraging, stigmatizing or 'derealizing' [Butler 2004b, 27, 114, 217–218]) others. Rather, and in virtue of this notion, discourses can also themselves to a certain extent be given direction by feelings; in line with the Butlerian notion of abjection and the symptoms or resistances it potentially produces (Butler 1993). (I write "to a certain

extent" because there can be no unmediated discursive 'equivalent' or 'expression' to affective experiences. Rather, the attempt to articulate any given experience involving feelings will in turn constitute the latter in terms of a given discursive frame, to the exclusion of other possible frames. I will return to this point further below.) That is to say, discourses shape and even render possible, in the first place, a certain, socially legitimated and fully articulable emotional repertoire (cf. Wetherell 2015, 147), but discourses must also be understood as themselves being potentially impinged upon by inchoate feelings that are not fully contained by those discourses' own terms of intelligibility – in line with the psychoanalytic resonance of the Butlerian notion of a discursive unconscious, understood as constitutive outside.

The chiastic model of the relationship between discourse and affect being developed here would not reduce affect to a conceptual addition to the notion of discursive practice, as proposed by Wetherell (2012; 2015). As indicated earlier, Wetherell's account of affective-discursive practice risks conceptually confining affect to a mere dimension of discourse. This is suggested by her move from the notion of discursive practice, proposed by her (with Jonathan Potter) in the 1990s (Wetherell/Potter 1992), to the expanded but substantially unaltered notion of affective or affective-discursive practice (see esp. Wetherell 2012, 118–119; 2015, 152) – two terms she appears to use synonymously (2015, 152). 'Affective' here appears to figure as an add-on to the earlier concept, referring essentially to the *modality* in which discourses are practiced or performed. Wetherell writes (commenting upon William M. Reddy's [2001] concept of an 'emotive'):

> "I predict that *affective meaning-making* in most everyday domains might make, in fact, little distinction between 'emotives', and what we might call 'cognitives' and 'motives'. That is, speech acts formulating reasons and thoughts ('cognitives'), or action plans and goals ('motives'), will be as important as speech acts formulating emotions ('emotives'). *Affective-discursive action* is probably most frequently accomplished *seamlessly* through all three where it is more or less impossible to establish credible analytic distinctions between them.

> […] Just as affective neuroscience is *dismantling distinctions between affect and cognition*, those studying affective meaning-making *will perhaps need to do the same*" (Wetherell 2012, 73; emphasis added).

In Wetherell's account of affective-discursive practice, affect thus seems to be conceived of as an *accompaniment* to (or a property of) discursive practices, understood as contextually situated meaning-making (cf. Wetherell 2012, 76; 2015). There is no notion here of an affective life of discourses that would dynamize them, and give them direction, *as a function of their abjection of certain affects as unintelligible; as their 'unconscious'* (see esp. Wetherell 2012, Ch. 6).[11]

Due to the missing sense of dynamism in Wetherell's rendering of the relationship *between* discourse and feeling, her model of that relationship also would seem to be unable to account for change on a historical scale. For, her notion of 'affective-discursive practice' seems to be tailored primarily to the micro-level of social interaction, designating performances unfolding from moment to moment, i.e. in specific situations (see, e.g., Wetherell 2012, 72–74 and Ch. 4). By contrast, on the account I am offering here, the relationship between discourse and affect is conceived of in much more dynamic terms; in the sense that *each may act on the other*, and thus, in terms of a potential for *tension* between them: As suggested earlier, discourses may undergo historical transformation partially as a consequence of the insistence (in symptomatic or barely speakable form) of affects which the relevant discourses would nullify or fail to acknowledge – that is, ultimately, in virtue of the link I have postulated to pertain between *the emotional costs of social subordination or exclusion* to those negatively affected thereby, and

11 In her critical account of psychoanalysis, in which she rejects notions of what she calls "the dynamic unconscious" (2012, 123) as insufficiently social in conception, Wetherell very briefly mentions Butler's theoretical rendering of psychoanalysis, but fails either to endorse or to critique it (2012, 131). This is despite the fact that Wetherell's critique of psychoanalysis would barely seem to be applicable to Butler's *social-theoretical* reframing of the unconscious in terms of the concept of abjection (see main text above and below). Her remarks on Butler appear to be strangely unintegrated into her overall account.

a resulting *desire for (potentially political) change*. On this latter account, emotions abjected under a given hegemonic order – particularly as associated with social groups subordinated thereby – can contribute to the formation of new discourses. The theoretical bottom line here is straightforward: When discourse and affect are conceptualized as leaking into each other to the point of becoming indistinguishable, the possibility of dynamic tension *between* them becomes inconceivable.

Situating 'discourse' and 'feeling' in power relations: Towards 'double-edged thinking' (Butler)

I submit that to frame 'discourse' and 'feeling' as being chiastically related, as elucidated above, will in turn deepen our sense of 'discourse', providing us with a theoretically more grounded, politicized and more critical understanding of that term itself than what we have when we reduce discourse to verbal practices as they occur in specific situations, that is, to *what is empirically observable* (see, e.g., Wetherell 2012, 133–134, 75–76 and Ch. 3 more generally; see also Potter *et al.* 1990). To clarify what I find reductive about Wetherell's notion of a discursive practice – and insufficiently critical with a view to the saturation of both discourse and affect with power – I want to apply to this notion a critique that Butler has formulated with reference to an analogous notion of gender as performance, as reduced to activities observably performed:

> "It is not enough to say that gender is performed, or that the meaning of gender can be derived from its performance […]. Clearly there are workings of gender that do not 'show' in what is performed as gender, and to reduce the psychic workings of gender to the literal performance of gender would be a mistake. Psychoanalysis insists that the opacity of the unconscious sets limits to the exteriorization of the psyche. It also argues – rightly, I think – that what is exteriorized or performed can only be understood by reference to what is barred from performance, what cannot or will not be performed" (Butler 1997, 144–145).

As Butler goes on to argue, "certain forms of disavowal and repudiation come to organize the performance of gender" (1997, 145) – as in the collective melancholic repudiation of homosexual desire, which cannot be acknowledged and, hence, constitutes a lost possibility that is ungrievable as a matter of cultural proscription (Butler 1997, 145–148). As I understand it, the point made here by Butler incorporates an insight according to which power has positive, enabling *along with* negative sides to it, which must be considered together if we are to refrain from producing a foreshortened, one-sided notion of the term (see also Butler 1993, 8). A double-edged (Butler 2004b, 129) theoretical framing of 'power', in the sense just proposed, would do justice to the concept of biopower or biopolitics, as elaborated by Foucault (2004, Ch. 11) as well as Butler (2015a, Ch. 6): Either term in these writers' usage entails that the operation of power is bifurcated such that supporting, and protecting, the lives of some (e.g., 'straight' 'white' 'cis' people) is tied up with consigning others to physical or social death (e.g., queer People of Color). To think power as thus bifurcated entails the thesis that its negative operation for some subjects is constitutive of its 'positive' operation for others (Foucault 2004, Ch. 11; Butler 2015a).[12] As I read Butler, the significance of the notion of a constitutive outside, as she deploys it, is not limited to reconceptualizing the unconscious as discursive, as explained above. It is not limited to a psychoanalytic register. Rather, Butler uses this notion in a number of contexts, in such a way as to fruitfully articulate with each other *social* exclusion (groups of subjects consigned to social or literal death) and an analysis of the ways in which it plays out at a (collective) *psychic* level (see, e.g., 1993, 3, 8, 22; 2015a; see also Braunmühl 2012b).

When we think 'discourse' against the backdrop of such a double-edged conception of power (which is markedly critical in that it

12 Foucault's critique of the hegemonic construction of power as predominantly negative or oppressive led him to accentuate, for his part, power's productive or constitutive effects one-sidedly (see chapter 4 of this book). But the notion of biopower which he develops in *Society Must be Defended* (2004, Ch. 11) is more balanced.

highlights inequality) – that is, of power as both abjecting and constructive, and as simultaneously social and psychic in operation – then we will arrive at a richer, more complex understanding of the first term as well: If discourses are thought of as taking shape within the framework of generating their 'own' unconscious – a constitutive outside to the discourses in question – then they can be considered activities performed by subjects (as entailed in Wetherell's conception of discursive practice, with its focus on what subjects *accomplish* by way of "[a]ffective-discursive action" [e.g., Wetherell 2012, 73]) only *on the one hand*. *On the other hand*, subjects must then be thought of as *being* performed – constituted/abjected – by discourses at the same time (contra Wetherell 2012, Ch. 6). That is to say, from a double-edged notion of power, as such, we can move to an equally double-edged notion of *power as entailed in discursive practices*, according to which subjects both give shape to discourses and are shaped by them. This applies in the sense that what gets done when we engage discourses is far more than the effects we are aware of, let alone aim for (Butler 2004b, 173; cf. Braunmühl 2012b).[13]

Further, if we return, from here, to the relationship between discourse and affect, we can see how what, according to Butler, "is barred from performance, what cannot or will not be performed" (see above) in any given *discursive* practice is closely linked to the domain of *feelings* abjected by a given set of discursive scripts: It is *because* "what

13 Here I need to qualify my earlier account of the relationship between feelings and experience: I have previously written that emotions happen to us, 'doing' or even undoing us more than being done by us (Braunmühl 2012b). This was to produce as one-sided an account of the operation of emotions as Wetherell's account of affect as essentially an activity of subjects – only with a bias in the opposite direction. Today I would maintain that we need to hold on to both formulations at the same time. What is missing from the account I have given previously is the active, ethical dimension of subjects' relationship to emotions; the sense in which affective life is open to conscious influence, e.g., through the practices we engage in. To hold on to both of the above formulations at the same time would also be more consistent with the double-edged approach to theorizing the relationship between discourse and affect being proposed here.

is exteriorized or performed" (Butler, see above) *produces its 'discontents'* (Freud 1989) that the double-edged character of power, understood as biopower, entails that abjection as a process is affectively intensely charged. Indeed, *the discontents generated in virtue of the bifurcation of power is primarily affective in quality – rather than primarily cognitive.* On this view, power's negative side – its abjection of certain groups of subjects, in a simultaneously social and psychic sense – generates an affective charge that can account for the dynamic relationship I have posited to pertain between discourse and feeling: The emergence of new discourses becomes fully intelligible only when we understand the search for, or experimentation with, discursive alternatives (e.g., by social movements) to be motivated, first and foremost, *emotionally*. Such work at the boundaries of (already-constituted) discourse must be viewed as seeking to bring into the world, to establish as socially real and recognizable, what was previously derealized (Butler, 2004b, 27, 114, 217–218) or framed as unintelligible.

Ultimately, what I find missing from accounts of emotion, discourse and the relationship between the two which, like Wetherell's, reduce these both to an activity (2015) without considering the 'negative' implications of, or the shadows thrown by, what is 'positively' on display, is a sense of the affective costs of what discourses render as unintelligible and abject – of what they 'bar from performance' (Butler; see above). For the reasons detailed above, I find the Butlerian notion of discourses – namely, as steeped in abjection and, therefore, in melancholy or, put more generally, in an affective dynamic[14] – to be richer and deeper, as well as more politicized and critical, than the somewhat one-dimensional notions of discourse (including its affective

14 Butler in my view unnecessarily privileges melancholy and the associated subject of loss in theoretically framing the relationship between discourse and affect. While this is to take account of the biopolitical selectivity in terms of which hegemonic discourses frame only certain subjects' lives as grievable, while treating the lives of other subjects as ungrievable (Butler 2015a, 119), I believe that this forms only one of many different emotional repercussions potentially generated by discourses.

dimension) found in some cognitivist and praxeological accounts of emotion, such as Wetherell's or Eva Illouz's (2008), which may well be contained by a metaphysics of presence (Derrida 1976). These accounts lack a politicized sense of how *discourses* (organized as they are in terms of normative economies) *affect* subjects – in ways *both* enabling and disabling or destructive, that is, as potentially harmful at an affective level.

While I am arguing that feelings play a central role in struggles to form new discourses, the impact of feeling upon discourse can only ever be a mediated one, as alluded above: Any experience, however much it may be rendered as impossible or 'perverse' by extant discourses, can only be articulated by being framed in discursive terms. This process entails constituting such affective experience *in one way or another, to the exclusion of alternative* discursive possibilities and by reference to some form of *existing* discursive frame(s). It is in the course of 'citing' such frames that the latter are rearticulated and transformed over time: We can envisage *the manner in which* feelings can affect discursive, and thus political, change in terms of the Butlerian notion of "performativity as citationality" (Butler 1993, 12), as I have explained in more detail elsewhere (Braunmühl 2012b). Given that, as Butler argues with reference to the operation of norms, the law exists only in its citation (1993, 107–109), the citation of scripts for the socially situated (racialized, gendered, etc.) performance and experience of emotions is not necessarily a faithful, identical rendition of the normative prescriptions entailed in such scripts. On the contrary, 'outward' affective performance as much as the only *apparently* 'inward' attempt to 'feel the right way' can miss the mark, subverting and potentially even resignifying scripts for the performance of emotions, in sometimes unforeseeable ways.

Conclusions: From double-edged thinking to a practical politics of emotion

I submit that only if we conceive of discourses and emotions as potentially operating *in tension with each other*, as illustrated by the model of the chiasm, can we develop a theoretical account of their relationship which does not produce a hierarchy between the two, whether it be in the form of subordinating discourse to affect or the other way round. Once we consider both categories as implicating each other mutually, without either one being reducible to the other, we can envisage discourses as shaping emotions (without fully determining them), just as much as we can entertain the possibility of emotions affecting (without strictly determining) the form taken by specific discourses. That is, we can then conceive of the relationship between discourses and feelings in terms of *mutual* affectation – as contrasted with notions of a uni-directional influence that would seem to be hierarchizing at least implicitly.

What is more, we can then account, both for constellations of discourse and affect in which the two closely *cohere*, and for *dissonances* between them. This is so in virtue of the fact that, on the model introduced above, discourses shape affective life in terms of (implicit or explicit) normative distinctions between legitimate and illegitimate feelings, between emotions befitting or unbefitting a given category of subjects. Since those feelings which are socially legitimated and even promoted don't entirely exhaust the spectrum of what can be felt, however, there is scope *both* for feelings that cohere completely with already-available, fully articulated discourses, *and* for emotions that fail to do so in an absolute sense. It is politically important to provide for each of these possibilities at a conceptual level, as otherwise it would be difficult to account, on the one hand, for the formation of emotional and (eventually, in the best scenario) discursive as well as bodily *resistance* on the part of the socially subordinated and excluded and, on the other hand, for scenarios in which such resistance *fails* to form, due to an identification on the part of such subjects with the discursively prescribed, socially established emotional spectrum.

Theories of affect tend one-sidedly to highlight either the link between affect and subordination or between affect and resistance (see Bargetz 2015). Instead, both tendencies – the role of affect in cultivating compliance with relations of domination *and* its role in engendering resistance – should be thought of as always competing with each other, with either one outweighing the other at different times. Interpellation continues to be a useful notion when it comes to the evidence of widespread conformity, even submission, to hegemonic order (see, e.g., Braunmühl 2012a), including the feelings which the discourses associated with such order legitimize as compatible with it; as posing no threat. But what of those historical moments, and social tendencies, in which interpellation fails?

Arlie Russell Hochschild has made an apparently simple point which I find convincing as an explanation of the occurrence of resistance and movements for social change: She states (referencing Freud) that feelings entail a signal function to the self with a view to how a given state of affairs affects *me* (2003, 230–232; see also Hochschild 2003, 196–197). When she elaborates on the 'human' or 'psychological' *costs* of flight attendants' emotional labor (see note 2 to this chapter), her account harks back to the notion of such a signal function: It is because (contrary to some accounts) affects aren't free-floating entities unto themselves, but entail judgments as to the positioning of a socially situated *self* in relation to the rest of the world, that social subordination or exclusion generates suffering – at least as a tendency which, depending on how pronounced it is in a given context, potentially works against the force of interpellation. I find it utterly implausible to assume that resistance occurs primarily as a matter of *cognitive insight* into one's interests or into the injustice of the social order: If struggles for political and social change for the better (e.g., for equality) were not connected to the expectation that achieving such change would reduce suffering – the prospect of an "unbearable life or, indeed, social or literal death" (Butler 2004b, 8) – and would, by the same token, enhance the possibility of a livable life for all,

then such struggles would be pointless.[15] The costs of subordination – aside from its material costs to those concerned, which are at least as significant for the formation of resistance movements in my view – are first and foremost emotional in kind (and this includes the ways in which subjects relate *affectively* to their perceived material interests and predicament). It is for this reason that struggles for hegemony involve a perpetually unstable balance of forces (Gramsci 1971), not only with a view to the relationship *between* opposing forces, but also to the *constitution of* counter-hegemonic movement – as part of which tendencies towards (self-)subordination compete with tendencies towards the contrary.

This returns us to the point with which I began this chapter: To theorize discourse, if it is to be a politicized endeavor (concerned

15 To say this is to disagree with Ahmed's claim that to strive for happiness, or to assume that happiness is what is good (i.e., desirable), is to operate in the hegemonic logic which she refers to as the moral economy of happiness (2010, 62, *passim*). In my view, a striving for happiness is necessarily entailed in the desire or impulse to escape affective discomfort (i.e. what *affects* me negatively), strong degrees of which I refer to as 'suffering'. Without taking such an impulse as given, much in our discourses – including Ahmed's (2010) theoretical discourse – would become unintelligible. For instance, if there were no connection whatsoever between social subordination, emotional discomfort, and the desire to escape it – however mediated and, hence, historically and culturally specific in modality we may take this connection to be – then the phenomenon of resistance would be unintelligible. I am suggesting, then, that we are dealing here with a necessary presupposition which we cannot possibly forego, except by way of contradicting ourselves. Ahmed does contradict the principal thesis of her book *The Promise of Happiness*, as paraphrased above, repeatedly when, in the same book, she uses terms such as 'happiness' or 'joy' affirmatively (see, e.g., Ahmed 2010, 69, 103, 114, 198; see also Ahmed 2010, 120). Rejecting particular (e.g. hegemonic) modes of framing 'happiness' does not require one to reject happiness as such. A more coherent approach would be to posit that all subjects strive for *some version* of happiness or 'joy', of being affected positively, however they may be framing what this is or entails. This is the case even when such positive affects are being sought in the experience of pain, as in masochism. The argument condensed in this note forms the subject of chapter 5 of this book.

with questions of power and inequality; in solidarity with struggles for progressive social change), makes it necessary to theorize affect at the same time. I have argued that a feminist and intersectional, egalitarian politics should move beyond hierarchizing accounts of the relationship between the two – whether such accounts be dualistic in the classical sense or identitarian. As a step in this direction, and in order to render with more precision a non-hierarchizing account of the relationship between feeling and discourse, I have proposed a chiastic model of that relationship.

In closing, I want to suggest that conceiving of affect and discourse as being chiastically related also has potential for the formulation of a feminist, egalitarian *practical* politics of emotion. Much like feminist *theory* (see, e.g., Ahmed 2010; Hemmings 2005; Bargetz 2015), such a politics would attend to the thrust, and the effects, of feelings (no matter whether these be categorized as such, as 'affects', or as 'emotions' by recent convention) with a view to their role in stabilizing unegalitarian social orders or in aligning with specifically progressive moves towards change. What is relevant about feelings from the point of view of a practical politics committed to social equality is to strive to *change ways of feeling that stabilize social hierarchy and exclusion*. This could include orienting to an ethos of non-identitarian integration (Braunmühl 2012b), which acknowledges the impossibility of governing or policing emotions exhaustively, whilst at the same time striving *mutually to approximate* our affective life and the discourses, as well as the norms, to which we orient (whether avowedly or merely implicitly [see Barnett 2008]) in struggling for political change.[16]

According to the line of theorizing developed above, this might entail orienting to feelings, and allowing ourselves to be guided by them, in our theorizing (that is, in re-fashioning discourses) – in much the way 'consciousness raising' has been conceived of, namely, as a collective labor of transgressing, and transforming,

16 The above is a modified version of the account of non-identitarian integration I have given previously. See notes 7 and 13 to this chapter for a fuller account of the change my thinking has undergone in this respect.

patriarchal discourse by attending to feminists' experiences (cf. Mardorossian 2002, 764–765, 769–771), including, presumably, their emotional experiences – while *at the same time* subjecting (our) affects to theoretico-political scrutiny and critique, thus seeking to re-orient them in light of the political norms we embrace. (For instance, as a way of allowing ourselves to be decentered as subjects positioned hegemonically in some respects in the face of political critique, when narcissism might instead prevent us from responding to such critique with solidarity, disposing us to react defensively or with paralyzing guilt instead.) We do not need to pick and choose between these feminist modalities of practically relating – by way of mutually orienting – emotions and discourse to each other. Rather than rejecting either of these two possibilities as incompatible with the other one, we can embrace them as complementary, as mutual correctives – thus rendering productive the tension between them.