Chapter 3: The Turn to Affect and its Application to Reality TV

This chapter concerns the theoretical perspective and framework of the book. First of all, I review the ways emotions have been conceived in both the history of Western and Chinese thought. Secondly, I introduce the recent trends of the affective turn across the humanities and social sciences as a response to theoretical and practical challenges in contemporary societies since the mid-1990s. I offer an overview of the two dominant approaches in this trend – affect as bodily intensity, which is typically associated with developments in philosophy and the humanities; and affect as elemental state, which has its roots in psychology and neuroscience. Then in the third part, I discuss the third strand of inquiry into affect that emerges in communication and cultural studies, which is also the strand I am following in this book – the social-relational understanding of affects. This strand attempts to bridge or mediate the two dominant accounts, in which affects are not assigned to individual traits, but actualize relationally in the interaction between subjects and objects. Based on this approach, the theoretical framework applied to analyze reality TV is elaborated in the fourth part, in which I also show how relational affect can complement the representational and ideological paradigms by offering a more embodied and dynamic optic. Above all, this chapter establishes a comprehensive theoretical framework for understanding the workings of affects and emotions in reality TV.

3.1 A brief history of emotions in Western and Eastern thought

3.1.1 Ideas of emotions in Western history[1]

The history of Western thought has never ignored affect and emotion, although discussions of both tend to assign them a backseat to reason. The contention between emotion and reason can be traced back to Ancient Greek philosophy. In the *Republic*, Plato divides reason (a rational soul) from passion[2] (a non-rational soul, which he further divides into "appetite" and "spirit"), and emphasizes that reason should rule passion just like a skillful and controlling charioteer in charge of a pack of wild horses. In a similar vein, Aristotle argues that the non-rational soul "is in a way persuaded" by reason, but is more confident in the power of the *pathē* and sees it as a central facet of ethical life. He argues that the truly excellent person will not only reason well but will have the appropriate emotional dispositions in particular situations, and emotional education through training the agent in the correct responses of pleasure and pain, will habituate him in choosing and acting well (cf. Price, 2010). For this reason, *pathē* are in effect more crucial to a good life. However, compared with Aristotle's optimistic outlook on the *pathē*, the Stoics expressed greater intolerance, stressing their cognitive, eudaimonistic, and moral failings. Emotions are literally pathologies of the mind for them, thus to the extent possible, the Stoics propose to practice certain kinds of mental discipline to eliminate, rather than to moderate the capacities of alien passions (cf. Schmitter, 2021).

In general, in the Classical age of Greece, emotions are widely recognized as a fixture of human life that cannot be ignored, but ought to be controlled and moderated by rationality. The philosophical belief on rationality is followed by Renaissance scholars who embraced a humanist approach, empha-

1 In this section, I discuss the history of Western emotion ideas in general chronological order, with the goal of capturing some of these recurring themes and extracting some of the essential points discussed by the philosophers who proposed them, that also form the cornerstone of the affect theories discussed in the next section of the book.

2 When reviewing the works of different philosophers, I find that different terms are used to express the concept of emotion, including pathos, passion, sentiment, émotion, affekt, feeling, etc. For the convenience of illustration, I use "emotion" in this section as an umbrella concept to denote the broad and heterogeneous emotional phenomena, and I also indicate the specific terms used by an author when a difference in connotation is implied.

sizing human dignity and the capacity for reason. In *The Passions of the Soul*, René Descartes (1985) constructed the mind-body dualism, which also involved a contrast between emotion and reason. Emotions or passions are, according to in his "body first" theory, actions of the body (Hatfield, 2007). Descartes conceived the initial process of bodily responses to be entirely mechanical: when sensory stimulation causes a bodily response, this results in the passions of the soul.

Descartes's mechanized interpretation of emotions was reversed by the British Empiricists, especially David Hume. Hume, who described himself as a "pagan" philosopher, discussed emotion at length (cited in Plamper, 2015, p. 23). In his view, "reason is, and ought only to be the slave of the passions, and can never pretend to any other office than to serve and obey them" (Hume cited in Blumenau, 2002, p. 292). He argued that human instinct drove people to seek good and avoid evil, and passions are the engine for all our deeds; they are impressions – strong and lively perceptions with a certain "feel" and a direction, or impulse. Reason, however, is inert and incapable of generating impulses or drives to move by itself. What reason can do is to connect various ideas to fulfill the ends given by passions/desires. Based on this sentimentalist bent, Hume considers our moral judgements to be rooted in motivating emotions (Kauppinen, 2014).

In contrast to Descartes, Baruch de Spinoza rejected any dualism between mind and body, reason and emotion. In *Ethics*, he proposes that there exists a single divine substance, the mental and physical are two aspects or manifestations of it. Spinoza's parallelism holds that whereas the human mind is a mode of thought, it is necessarily embodied, and can only experience itself as a mode of extension (e.g. a physical body) entangled with other modes of extension because "the object of the idea constituting the human mind is the body, or a certain mode of extension which actually exists, and nothing else" (Spinoza cited in Robinson & Kutner, 2019, p. 114). Affects, according to Spinoza, are "the modifications of the body, whereby the active power of the said body is increased or diminished, aided or constrained, and also the ideas of such modifications" (Spinoza, 1997/1678, Definition III). The increasing and decreasing of bodily power is related to the possible changeability of these bodies. He recognized three primary affects: desire, joy or pleasure, and sadness or pain, "each one generally being called by a different name on account of its varying relations and extrinsic denominations" (Spinoza, 1985, p. 541). Spinoza's philosophy has been heavily re-read by contemporary theorists

of affect, yet has also resulted in confusions about the use of affect, which I will return to with more details in the next section.

However, the division between emotion and reason was greatly sharpened during the Enlightenment period in the seventeenth century. For example, Kant defended a reason-centered model that privileges reason over the crudeness of the "senses". For him, emotion is "the feeling of a pleasure or displeasure in the subject's present state that does not let him rise to reflection" (Kant translated by Louden, 2006, p. 149). Whereas emotions could become a "temporary surrogate of reason", passions lay far beyond the range of an ethics governed by reason. This means for Kant that emotional subjects are "bad" subjects because being "subject to affects and passions is probably always an *illness of the mind*" (ibid, italics in original). In short, in Kant's normative hierarchy of knowledge, "our knowledge begins with the senses, proceeds then to the understanding, and ends with reason. There is nothing higher than reason" (Kant, 1998, Part 1.2.2.i). As a consequence, affect and emotion are often located as opposites to rationality and cannot occupy a space in these theoretical frames.

Traces of emotions can also be found in the writings of classical sociologists since the 19th century. For them, emotions are not merely interior processes that occur in the mind and body of individuals, but inherently social phenomena involving social relations and social structures (Harré, 1986). For example, Emile Durkheim claimed that emotions are the glue that holds society together. The social body is connected when the "collective emotion" or "common feeling" is transmitted and felt within people (Durkheim, 1964/1895). Norbert Elias argued in *The Civilizing Process* (2000) that Western civilization has always relied on affect control structures – systematic mechanisms which regulate individual behavior to ensure the smooth functioning of society. Max Weber posited affectual action as one of the "four ideal types of social action" (Weber, 2019/1920, p. 83). In *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, Weber also discussed the role of emotions in economic action, for "it is the anxiety provoked by an inscrutable divinity which is at the heart of the capitalist entrepreneur's frantic activity" (Illouz, 2007, p. 1). Overall, their main focus is on the rationalization of modern societies, and emotions are located in the social-constructionist scope that can only be understood as part of the culture in which they have meaning.

As a whole, what we witness in the history of Western thought is not a dismissal of the significance of emotion in human nature; instead, there is a long history of debates about the role and place of emotion, about which emotions

are desirable and which are impedimentary or even disruptive, and about how to manage them. Among them, the empiricism represented by Hume may be the most intensive discussion of emotion. Yet, perhaps because empiricism fails to reach a universal consensus, it has reached a deadlock where we can only get the feeling about the feeling. Briefly, under the undisputed dominance of the rationalist paradigm, the tendency to associate rationality with knowledge-making and science was matched by a lack of interest in emotional dimensions. In these paradigms, reason is prioritized as the safeguard of objective knowledge and democratic societies, as Lakoff and Johnson (1980) pointed out, "the view that we have access to absolute and unconditional truths about the world is the cornerstone of the Western philosophical tradition…For the rationalists, only our innate capacity to reason can give us knowledge of things as they really are" (p. 195). On the contrary, emotion has tended to be understood in terms of its irrelevance and even deviance from ideals of the public sphere. As a consequence, the superior rationality and the notion of an essentially emotionally-detached, rational state of human beings has established the rise of modern science. However, this paradigm has faced analytic challenges as emotions are increasingly visible and prominent in contemporary societies, leading to the increasing significance of affects and emotions as the focus of analysis in various disciplines. Before expounding on this turn in the next section, I will briefly review traditional Chinese thought about emotions.

3.1.2 Ideas of *qing* (情) in Chinese history[3]

Whereas Western ideas of emotions are primarily derived from philosophy, and more recently, from science, ideas of emotions in China are generated from the moral values and aesthetic thoughts of Confucianism and Taoism. In other words, rather than as a philosophical enquiry of the pursuit of truth,

3 Different from the chronological discussion of Western emotion ideas, in this section, my discussion of Chinese ideas of *qing* is focusing on Confucianism and Taoism, which form the basic "structure of feelings" of traditional Chinese society. Those familiar with traditional Chinese culture may know that Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism are often discussed together, because they have penetrated and merged with each other in the long river of Chinese history. But here, regarding the thought of *qing*, the Buddhist influence has added some views, but the basic structure has not been changed, so it is omitted here, and interested readers can refer to Sundararajan (2015); Zhao (2020).

Chinese thoughts of emotions are more a form of life wisdom, or practical wisdom, with the very realistic goal of improving people's spiritual realm, or *jingjie* (境界, "mental world") through the cultivation of morality, physicality, and aesthetics.

In Chinese philosophy, perhaps *qing* (情) is the concept closest to "emotion" in English. It is often used in conjunction with *xing* (性, "nature") to form the term *xingqing* (性情), so that *qing* often implies something/someone is genuine, natural, essential or sincere (Graham, 1986). *Qing* is also often used in combination with *gan* (感), a verb that means to affect/stir or being affected/aroused, resulting in the term *ganqing/qinggan* (感情/情感), which is very close to the Spinozan concept of affect. The location of *qing* in Confucianism can be roughly grasped from the classic Confucian Guodian chu slips (n.d.), which argues,

> 凡人虽有性,心亡奠志,待物而后作,待悦而后行,待习而后奠。喜怒哀悲之气,性也。及其见于外,则物取之也。性自命出,命从天降。道始于情,情生于性。……好恶,性也。所好所恶,物也。
>
> While all human beings possess *xing*, their *xin* (heart-mind) lack a fixed intention. It depends on (external) things to become active, it depends on pleasure to become functioning, and it depends on practice to become fixed. The *qi* (vital force) of happiness, anger, sadness, and grief is *xing*. When it appears on the outside, it is because (external) things have laid hold of it. Humanity derives from Fate, the Fate descends from Heaven. The *dao* begins in *qing*, *qing* is derived from *xing*….Liking and disliking is one's nature. What is liked and disliked are things.

So *qing* is not understood in opposite to rationality, but as an externalization and expressive form of *xing*, and hence as an inherent part of it. Accordingly, Puett (2004) paraphrases *qing* as "one's emotional disposition… the way that one's emotions will be pulled out in particular circumstances" (p. 46). Another Guodian scholar, Andreini, states that "on the one hand we have 'emotions, passions, feelings' and on the other the idea of 'real, true, genuineness'" (2006, p. 151). Closely related with the sense of authenticity, in Chinese culture *qing* is considered to be in contrast to *mao* (貌, "appearance", "guise", or "description") and *xing* (形, "form" or "shape") (Middendorf, 2008, p. 117).

In general, *qing* in Confucian thought has three layers of meaning (Tu, 2017, p. 59–60): first, the *situation*, referring to the factual state of things/matters themselves. In Hansen's (1995) words, *qing* is "the apprehensible, reality-based criteria for shared, objective naming…a kind of *authentic* standard" (p.

197, italics in original). As mentioned repeatedly above, this meaning is derived from its close relation with *xing,* and is often applied to describe an objective state – there is no such thing as good or evil. Secondly, *emotion,* referring to a certain mental state of a subject. Similar to the basic emotion theory in the West, Confucianists also argued for the existence of a basic *qing*. The theory of seven basic *qing* has been proposed in the *Book of Rites* (*Liji* 礼记), including joy, anger, sadness, fear, love, hate, desire – "these seven we are capable of without having learned them" (*Liji* as cited in Hansen, 1995, p. 202). The third is *social affection*, which refers to the medium and the capital used to maintain and communicate interpersonal relationships, leading to the formation of the Chinese society of favor and *guanxi* (关系, "relations").

The value judgement of *xing* and *qing*, that is, the questions of whether *xing* and *qing* are good or evil has been inconclusively debated in the history of Chinese thought (cf. Tu, 2017). Nevertheless, as a kind of practical wisdom, Confucianism attaches greater importance to the refinement of emotions in real life, primarily through the pedagogy of rites and music. The classical text *The Doctrine of the Mean* (*Zhong yong* 中庸) (Zisi, n.d.) claims that,

> 喜怒哀乐之未发,谓之中; 发而皆中节,谓之和。中也者,天下之大本也; 和也者,天下之达道也。致中和。天地位焉,万物育焉。
>
> While there are no stirrings of pleasure, anger, sorrow, or joy, the mind may be said to be in the state of Equilibrium. When those feelings have been stirred, and they act in their due degree, there ensues what may be called the state of Harmony. This Equilibrium is the great root from which grow all the human actings in the world, and this Harmony is the universal path which they all should pursue.

So understood, the best state of emotions is balance and moderation, that is, a harmonious state (*he* 和/和谐) where things combine in balanced proportions. Thus, there is the theory of "regulation of emotions" (*zhiqing* 治情). This idea of improving character and virtue by managing emotions is similar to the ethics of the Greek philosopher Aristotle; but in my opinion, Confucianism is more concerned with the practicality of ideas than the formation of theoretical wisdom and logical contemplation. Therefore, unlike Western philosophy, which pursues theoretical rigor and systematization, Confucianism focuses more on how to internalize a stable character through the practice of the doctrine of the Mean in daily life, in order to become a gentleman, a sage; as the Confucianist Yan Yuan stated,

> 古人正心修身齐家, 专在治情上著工夫。治情专在平好恶上著工夫,平好恶又在专在待人处物上著工夫。
> The ancients who focused on rectifying the mind, self-cultivation and regulating the family, focused on the regulation of emotions. For regulation the focus is on distinguishing the good from the evil, for distinguishing the good from the evil the focus is on manner of dealing with people. (cited in Peng, 2002, p. 100).

In order to become benevolent or a saint, desires and ambitions within the affective sphere need to be kept in moderation so as not to proliferate unnecessarily. As Xunzi ("Zhenglun", n.d.) claimed,

> 欲虽不可尽,可以近尽也; 欲虽不可去,求可节也。所欲虽不可尽,求者犹近尽; 欲虽不可去,所求不得,虑者欲节求也。道者,进则近尽,退则节求,天下莫之若也。
> Although desires cannot be completely satisfied, they can be close to satisfaction; although desires cannot be completely removed, it can be controlled…Acting in accordance with the *Tao*, try to satisfy your desires when you can meet them, and restrain your desires when you can't. There is no better principle in the world.

In addition, according to Xunzi, the most important means of emotional regulation, or more appropriately, of emotional refinement, is *li* ("rites/rituals" 礼) (cf. Neville, 2010; Tan, 2012). The Confucian *li* refers to all the norms and rules for human actions, roles, and institutions of ancient society, including hierarchical order (Guo, 2018). It originated from customs becoming institutionalized and ritualized, and gradually becoming a state of life. For Xunzi, the rationality of *li* is built on the real *qing*, and he proposed to "establish ritual practices in accord with *qing*" ("Lilun", n.d.). Therefore, unlike the emotional regulation prevalent in Western tradition, the Confucian tradition privileges the improvement of emotional qualities from within the emotional system, as a practice of self-cultivation. The benchmarks of emotional refinement include more elusive goals such as creativity, growth and development (Sundararajan, 2015). The ultimate goal is to guide people's natural desires and emotions with the rationality defined by *li*, and sublimate them to ethical universal goodness, which in turn guides people to live a reasonable and good life (Peng, 2002).

To make emotions work in tandem with *li*, Confucianism also proposes to refine them and cultivate dispositions by using *yue* (乐), which mainly refers

to "music", but also includes poetry, literature, calligraphy, painting, dance, opera and other cultural forms (Chen & Wu, 2021). In classic Confucian texts, *yue* also connotes happiness, as Xunzi said, "Music (*yue*) is happiness (*yue*). The noble people find happiness in attaining their *Tao*, while the petty people find happiness in attaining what they desire" ("Yuelun", n.d.) The significance of *yue* lies in that by impressing, moving and resonating with one's soul and heart, good *yue* can naturally, viscerally, and spontaneously draw out proper *qing*, as well as corresponding physical reactions such as bodily movements. Together, *li* and *yue* are effective paths for moral transformation; it is through the right emotions and feelings that one is enabled to cultivate virtue (Chan, 2009).

Supplementing Confucian moral emotions, Taoism offers an aesthetic form of emotions in pursuit of emancipation and freedom, "to occupy oneself with the spirit-like operation of heaven and earth" ("Zapian", n.d.) and attain the harmony between man and heaven. This perspective can be found in a dialogue between Huizi and Zhuangzi:

> 惠子谓庄子曰: "人故无情乎"庄子曰: "然。"惠子曰: "既谓之人,恶得无情"庄子曰: "是非吾所谓情也。吾所谓无情者,言人之不以好恶内伤其身,常因自然而不益生也。"
>
> When Huizi asks Zhuangzi: can a man indeed be without *qing*? Zhuangzi answers: he can. Huizi asks again: but on what grounds do you call him a man, who is thus without *qing*? Zhuangzi replies: "What I mean by being without *qing* is that a man does not inwardly harm himself by likes and dislikes, but instead constantly follows the spontaneous and does not add to what is natural in him." (adapted from Graham, 1986, p. 62).

Here, being without *qing* does not mean to deny *qing* itself, but to deny the specific kind of *qing* that is being confined or trapped by things. For Zhuangzi, it is important to keep *qing* in its original, natural, and genuine state, rather than being stirred by external stimulus or being directed by cognitive appraisals. What Taoism pursues is self-satisfaction (*zideqile*, 自得其乐), a kind of happiness that can be achieved by returning to innocence, tranquility, and "inaction" (*wuwei*, 无为) or by letting nature take its course. According to Fung Yulan (1966/1948), the insistence on naturalness has given birth to "the romantic spirit" of Taoism (p. 231). It results in what Sundararajan (2015) called "a cult of spontaneity", "characterized by a paradoxical combination of impulsivity…and a more subtle sensitivity for pleasure and more refined needs than sheerly [sic] sensual ones" (p. 113).

In order to experience the aesthetic emotions, rather than through *li* and *yue,* Taoism adopts the cultivation methods of *Zuowang* (坐忘, "sitting and forgetting"), which means forgetting the difference and opposition between self and the universe; and *Xujing* (虚静, "void and peace"), refers to a state of mental concentration in which all distractions, such as desires and rational thoughts, should be dispelled to attain peace and purity of the soul. In order to keep the spontaneity of *qing*, Taoism proposes to abandon all forms of material and spiritual control, and distance oneself from utility, morals and institutions. Only in this way can man maintain the pure and poetic emotions necessary to enter the realm of aesthetics. As Zhuangzi said, "His words proceed from the void and peace, yet reach to heaven and earth, and communicate with all things, this is what is called the joy of heaven" ("Waipian", n.d.).

To summarize, instead of investigating what an emotion is, Chinese thought is more concerned with the practices and functions of emotions. Though aware that emotions include both cognitive appraisal and bodily experiential components, it is more focused on how to refine the "mental worlds" of the Chinese through spiritual development or self-cultivation. Confucianism and Taoism complement each other and advocate moral and aesthetic emotions that constituted part of the "practical reason and optimistic culture" of Chinese traditional culture (Li, 2008). Sundararajan (2015) stated that "one thing seems clear, namely that the Chinese notions of *qing* focus on the upstream, whereas the Western theories of discrete emotions, downstream of the river called emotions" (p. 200–01). In this way, Chinese philosophy seeks the noumenon of morality, the grasp of rationality, and the transcendence of spirit in the emotional world, daily life, and interpersonal relationships. Nature and man are united, emotion and reason are integrated; this is China's traditional spirit, the so-called Chinese wisdom, and this kind of wisdom is practical and aesthetic.

Chinese conceptions of emotions are more practically advanced than theoretically grounded. Being effective for thousands of years, the emotional norms, social relations, and the cultural-psychological structure framed by traditional Chinese thought have inevitably influenced how contemporary Chinese people feel and express emotions, yet they have also experienced transformations with the dramatic changes of the Chinese society. In this book, I take traditional Chinese thought on emotions more as analytical objectives than theoretical resources. In the empirical chapters (7 and 8), I will explore the media representations of these thoughts in contemporary

society, with a focus on their maintenance and changes as they face the challenges of modernization and urbanization. Before that, I will develop my theoretical framework in the next section, which is mainly derived from a critical reflection of the recent affective turns.

3.2 The different "affective turns" in the humanities and social sciences

The affective turn emerges at a time when critical theories have faced the dual challenge of reality and theory. Unlike previous eras when human emotions were less emphasized, contemporary societies are marked by an "emotional culture" in which emotions are actively present in all spheres of human and social life (Martínez & González, 2016). In order to compete for the limited attention resources of audiences, mass media and marketing increasingly resort to affectively charged elements, making private emotional experiences extremely easy and cheap products to obtain in the market; in politics, many political activities are often driven by the emotions of politicians or the public; voters, though often well informed and politically aware, think "with their guts" (Westen, 2007, p. xv). For politicians, the ability to show themselves as "human" and "authentic" through emotional expression is now seen as a central quality for leadership; and the booming of various courses and institutions that teach people to improve emotional intelligence also reflects the public's eagerness to manage and control overflowing emotions. The increasing visibility of affects and emotions in contemporary societies, either interpreted by some critics as a "regression" (Geiselberger, 2017) to a pre-modern state, or identified as a specific structural characteristic of Western late modernity (Reckwitz, 2020), nevertheless suggested "that which had been 'repressed' and 'controlled' in modern societies – affect, emotion, passion, desire – now takes centre stage" (Bens et al., 2019, p. 11).

The emotional boom not only signified the change of status of emotions in social life; it also raised fundamental questions for academia on how to understand these emotions in theory and practice. When talking about emotions, readers may start with the idea of individual subjective feelings or psychological responses to external stimulus – a conventional psychological understanding; but I want to emphasize here that my focus on emotions in this book is not on individual bodies but on the emotions represented, produced, and amplified by the media, especially by reality TV. This is not merely adding

a new topic to the field of reality TV analysis; the aim is to re-understand the working mechanism of reality TV, specifically examining its relationship with subjectivity, identity, and power through the lens of affect and emotion (see Chapter 3.4 for details). Such an approach is greatly inspired by the "affective turn" (cf. Clough & Halley, 2007; Gregg & Seigworth, 2010), which proposes more dynamic, vitalist, and process-based perspectives on the capacity of subjects, objects, or events to affect and be affected. Therefore, in order to advance a solid theoretical foundation for this book, it is worth reviewing the debates concerning the concepts and approaches to affect and emotion in "affective turns", and how to construct my own theoretical framework for analyzing emotions in popular culture based on a critical analysis of them.

As a broad field of research, the "affective turns" seem to have diverse theoretical approaches, and different analyses have different references and understandings of the concept affect. Seigworth and Gregg (2010) point out that affect theory might best be understood as an "inventory of shimmers" (p. 1) that ranges from classical sociological, psychoanalytic and Marxist to more cultural, new materialist and non-representational conceptions. Still, among the complex and often contentious conceptualizations of affect, two dominant strands can be identified (Ott, 2017). The first approach, which is typically associated with writings of philosophers of Baruch Spinoza, Henri Bergson, Gilles Deleuze, and Felix Guattari, treats affect as an intensive force, and emphasizes the significance of relationship among pre-linguistic bodies, affect and subjectivity. This tradition is reflected in Massumi's theory of autonomous affect and Nigel Thrift's non-representational theory. The second perspective, drawing on the research findings of behavioral sciences, especially psychology, neuroscience, and evolutionary anthropology, tends to view affect as an innate human biological response. This tradition is reflected in Silvan Tomkins's theory of primary affects and Antonio Damasio's theory of basic emotions. Recent extensions of this tradition include the work of Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, Lisa Cartwright, and Teresa Brennan. This section provides a review of the two approaches, focusing on the different understandings of affect and emotion, and concludes with critiques of them provided by scholars represented by Ruth Leys.

3.2.1 Affect as bodily intensity

The turn to affect which views affect as pre-individual bodily intensity can be traced back to a renewed interest in the Spinozian notion of *affectus*, and

then Deleuze's reinterpretation of Spinoza. As noted above, Spinoza was a monist who believed that there is only one substance in the universe. Thus, he describes affect (*affectus*) or emotion as both body and thought, nevertheless with different attributes; as he explains in *Ethics* III, emotion is "the modifications of the body by which the power of action of the body is increased or diminished, aided or restrained, and at the same time the idea of these modifications" (Spinoza cited in Thrift, 2008, p. 178). In his "Notes on the Translation" to Deleuze and Guattari's *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (1987/1980), Massumi elaborates on the term as follows:

> AFFECT/AFFECTION. Neither word denotes a personal feeling (sentiment in Deleuze and Guattari). L'affect (Spinoza's affectus) is an ability to affect and be affected. It is a prepersonal intensity corresponding to the passage from one experiential state of the body to another and implying an augmentation or diminution in that body's capacity to act. L'affection (Spinoza's affectio) is each such state considered as an encounter between the affected body and a second, affecting, body (with body taken in its broadest possible sense to include "mental" or ideal bodies). (p. xvi).

Based on his translation of Spinoza's work of distinguishing *affectus* from *affectio,* Massumi attempts to make a crucial distinction between affect and emotion. He proposes that "emotion and affect – if affect is intensity – follow different logics and pertain to different orders" (1995, p. 88). Massumi claims that human organisms operate via two parallel yet autonomous systems: one of quality and one of intensity. Whereas affect works on the "unassimilable" level of intensity, emotion works on the system of quality that is the "recognized affect, an identified intensity" (2002, p. 61). Specifically, affect is an inhuman, pre-subjective intensity that "embodied in purely autonomic reactions most directly manifested in the skin" (1995, p. 85). It exists outside conscious intentionality and social signification – it is defined by "indeterminacy" by "an openness to an elsewhere and otherwise than it is, in any here and now" (2002, p. 5). In contrast, emotion is individually and socially intelligible. As he stated in the article "The Autonomy of Affect", one of the foundational texts of the turn to affect,

> An emotion is a subjective content, the socio-linguistic fixing of the quality of an experience which is from that point onward defined as personal. Emotion is qualified intensity, the conventional, consensual point of insertion of

> intensity into semantically and semiotically formed progressions, into narrativizable action-reaction circuits, into function and meaning. (1995, p. 88).

To support this perspective on affect, Massumi makes use of Libet's neuroscientific experiment that supposedly shows that there is a half-second lapse between bodily affect and its outwardly directed, active expressions. Massumi takes this missing half-second as a moment in which higher functions of the brain such as volition are performed but automatically and outside of consciousness. It is not an empty period but a "realm of *potential*" full of incipiences and tendencies (1995, p. 91, italics in original). He describes this as the *virtual* – "a lived paradox where what are normally opposites coexist, coalesce, and connect" (ibid.), and as opposed to the *actual* – the concrete expression of a single possibility in reality. Then for Massumi, affect is neither a psychological event nor a moral sentiment. Rather, it is an "operative reason" – "the experimental crafting of negentropic induction to produce the practically impossible" (2002, p. 110–112). Affect has its own autonomy; it is real but cannot be seen, it is asocial, but not pre-social. For this reason, the cognitive system can influence the affect level, but it is through external resonance or interference with affect to achieve the effect of strengthening or weakening it.

The view that affect is nonconscious, asignifying, and presubjective is also reflected in Nigel Thrift's non-representational theory (NRT), which "copes with our self-evidently more-than-human, more-than-textual, multisensual worlds" (Lorimer, 2005, p. 83). Thrift (2008) characterizes NRT as consisting of seven tenets. Notably, Thrift does not attribute equivalent gravitas to each tenet. Rather, he recognizes that social life is messy, uneven, fragmentary and in a constant state of flux (Thrift, 2008, p. 5–15). First, NRT tries to capture the "on-flow" of "everyday life", to delve into lived life, the ebb and flow of sensory life, and the pre-cognitive. Second, NRT is anti-biographical and pre-individual: singular individuals are noted only for their effects on the present, on the existential performative. Third, it recognizes the value of embodied practices. Fourth, NRT asks us to give due weight to "the vast spillage of things". Fifth, it is unapologetically experimental. Sixth, it recognizes affect and sensation as concept-percepts that are as important as signs and significations. Seventh, it refers to a new paradigmatic shift that stresses the potential of bodily practices, of "promoting a 'politics' based on intensified attention to the present and unqualified affectivity" (Thrift, 2000, p. 42).

Drawing upon the seven tenets of NRT, Thrift explicitly gives emphasis to politics, showing how affect can enhance our understanding of power, knowl-

edge, and politics, and examines the new form of politics emergent in the "affective swirl that characterizes modern societies" (2008, p. 25). For Thrift, the manipulation of affect for political and commercial ends has reached new heights of impact in the present moment, he argues,

> the envelope of what we call the political must increasingly expand to take note of 'the way that political attitudes and statements are partly conditioned by intense autonomic bodily reactions that do not simply reproduce the trace of a political intention and cannot wholly be recuperated within an ideological regime of truth'. (Spinks, 2001, as cited in Thrift, 2004, p. 64).

For Thrift and Massumi, then, the plane of affect is firmly claimed as where power and other intense forms of manipulation – ranging from advertisement campaigns and viral marketing to political propaganda and techno-somatic agitprop – do their real work. With the notion of "affective fact", Massumi (2010) describes how the future reality of threat is continuously fed by a creation of uncertainty and pre-emptive actions, such as through positing double conditionals (would have, could have) of "war precautions" despite any lack of evidence. However, affect as intensity in flux is fundamentally ambiguous and completely open – "*Its autonomy is its openness*" (Massumi, 2002, p. 35; italics in the original). It is because of the autonomous and pre-cognitive status of affect that the affective response can never be determined and guaranteed; the transmission of affect may even suggest the emergence of counter-politics. According to Thrift, it is a "politics of hope":

> There seems to be a movement to new forms of sympathy – new affective recognitions, new psychic opportunity structures, untoward reanimations, call them what you like – forms of sympathy which are more than just a selective cultural performance and which allow different, more expansive political forms to be built. (2008, p. 254).

In general, affect for scholars like Massumi, emerges as part of a new vocabulary that is supposed to bring us beyond the limits of the hegemonic linguistic and (post-)structuralist paradigms that have dominated cultural theory over the past decades (Hemmings, 2005). The turn to affect, then, does not simply add topics referring to emotion to previous studies; more significantly, it "signifies a more extensive ontological and epistemological upheaval making a moment of paradigm change" (Wetherell, 2012, p. 2–3). Massumi (2002) criticizes the restrictions of hegemonic cultural theories: since they insist on social categories in a "self-augmenting" way: bodies and subjects are fixed in

cultural and social positions and coded on often essentialist identititarian descriptions of gender, race, class, and so on and thus remain enclosed within Enlightenment humanism. What they lose is "the expression *event* – in favor of structure" (Massumi, 1995, p. 87, italic in original).

Although Massumi, Thrift, and other affect scholars including but not limited to Barad (2007) and Clough (2008), have been criticized for their insistence on the (material) bodies and their autonomous, irresistible, yet unpredictable capacities for affect, I find this approach beneficial for my analysis on popular media in three ways. First, it is useful to distinguish between the concept of affect and emotion. Although, like many critics, I do not think the two are distinctively different, it is helpful to think about how media work at the affect/intensity level beyond representation and signification. Secondly, focusing on the body entails seeing the body not as a dumb object but in terms of its ability to affect and be affected. In *A Thousand Plateaus,* Deleuze and Guattari[4] suggest defining a body (human or non-human) not by "its organs and functions" or its "Species or Genus characteristics" but by the affects of which it is capable. Again, it helps to consider subjectivity not just in terms of identity, knowledge, and ideology, but also the affecting and being-affected processes through which identity, knowledge, and ideology are produced, reinforced, or contested. Thirdly, it helps to shift the focus to the dynamics, movements, and lived features of social life. Put differently, I follow their call for an epistemological turn through rethinking "body, subjectivity, and social change in terms of movement, affect, force, and violence – before code, text, and signification" (Massumi, 1995, p. 66). Applying it to reality TV analysis enables the analysis of the sense and meaning-making mechanisms of reality TV that have been "left out" of analyses focused on signification, ideology, and difference. Yet it also raises methodological problems in dealing with affect in the empirical analysis of social sciences, to which I will return with details in Chapter 5.

3.2.2 Affect as elemental state

The other approach of viewing affect as an elemental state has its roots in psychology and neuroscience (cf. Ott, 2017). This approach to affect is primarily

4 It should be noted that although Massumi draws a lot from both Deleuze and Guattari and Spinoza, their interpretations and applications are not always consistent, so when citing specific concepts and ideas, I try to clarify where they come from.

adopted by Sedgwick and Frank and originates from the work of Silvan S. Tomkins and Paul Ekman. Tomkins is typically cited as the modern inspiration for the "basic emotion" approach. While Massumi's Deleuzian interpretation of affect is as intensity characterized by an increase or decrease in bodily power, Tomkins decomposes affect into several distinct parts. He identifies nine *affect programs*, which scholar Nathanson (1992) calls the "hard-wired, preprogrammed, genetically transmitted mechanisms that exist in each of us" (p. 58). They are the "basic building blocks" of emotions and are arranged in three types or categories – two affects that are basically positive: (a) interest-excitement, and (b) enjoyment-joy; one that is neutral: (c) surprise-startle; and six others that are negative: (d) distress-anguish, (e) fear-terror, (f) anger-rage, (g) shame-humiliation, (h) disgust, and (i) dissmell. Each of them is a full bodily reaction that can be distinguished on the basis of their neural, bodily, behavioral and expressive features, and each colors our conscious experience and quality of feeling particular to an activity. Taken together they are known as the "affect system".

Ekman (2003) calls these affect programs "central information storages", positing that "stored in these central mechanisms there must be sets of instructions guiding what we do, instructions that reflect what has been adaptive in our evolutionary past…program refers to mechanisms that store information written before" (Ekman, 2003, p. 65). Thus affects are non-volitional forces, yet they are central factors in shaping our motivation and action. Unlike psychologists like Freud who theorize affects as only subordinate to the drives, Tomkins believes that affect is "the primary motivational system", that "it is not the drives that heighten or animate affect, but the affects that amplify drives" (Tomkins rephrased in Ott, 2017). His work proposes that affect can have far more freedom with respect to drive and can focus on many different kinds of objects, "There is literally no kind of object which has not historically been linked to one or another of the affects" (Tomkins cited in Sedgwick, 2003, p. 19). In other words, there is no necessary logic in affect; any object may be attached to any affect, and vice versa.

Tomkins pays particular attention to the face, not simply seeing it as a site for the expression of affect, but more significantly, it *is* affect in process:

> [A]ffects are not private obscure internal intestinal responses but facial responses that communicate and motivate at once both publicly outward to the other and backward and inward to the one who smiles or cries or frowns or sneers or otherwise expresses his affects. (Tomkins, 1962, p. 297).

Tomkins's study of the face as a means of learning affect influenced the work and ideas of Paul Ekman and Carrol Izard, who performed cross-culture research and reported the pan-cultural similarities in facial expressions of at least *six* emotions (anger, happiness, surprise, disgust, sadness, and fear). This finding was later developed to an approach known as *Discrete Emotion Theory*, which holds that basic emotions can be "diagnosed" or "read-out" from the way they are manifested in the organism (Colombetti, 2009, p. 410). In recent years there has been increasing criticism of this emotion theory. Scholars such as Russell (2006), Barrett (2006), and Leys (2011) believe that this theory is reductive and unable to address the variability of emotions and sensitivity to context. Yet for decades it has been very influential, and has greatly inspired many affective neuroscientists such as Antonio Damasio, who links emotions strongly to the body, as well as scholars in humanities and social sciences such as queer feminist theorist Sedgwick and Frank.

For Sedgwick, Tomkins's work on affect provides the potential to go beyond Foucaultian as well as Freudian discourses of sexuality, which she sees as dominated by the drive system. According to Sedgwick, the central problem facing Theory today is its own critical paranoia, wherein relentless attention to the structures of truth and knowledge obscures our experience of those structures, or what she calls as the "structural dominance of monopolistic 'strong theory'" (Sedgwick, 2003, p. 145). She advocates instead a "reparative" turn to the ontological and intersubjective, to a pacifist, non-conflictual, "weak" theory of non-differentiation of affects and co-existence of different performatives. In Chapter 3 of *Touching Feeling* (2003): *Shame in the Cybernetic Fold: Reading Silvan Tomkins*, co-authored with Adam Frank, Sedgwick explains how the "analogic", "many-valued", and "qualitative" theory of the digital models a better theory of affect:

> This part of Tomkins's theory could thus be schematized as analog – digital – analog – digital. What that (digitalizing) schema misses, though, is that Tomkins's theory ramified toward a many-valued (and in that sense analogic) understanding of affect: if the on/off of 'neural firing' is qualitatively undifferentiated, the on/off of affect activation is qualitatively highly differentiated – among no fewer than seven affects. (p. 102–103).

While I have reservations about Sedgwick's assertion that today's theory is an outdated "paranoid project" (see also Barnwell, 2020), her efforts to find a "different place to begin", and to get away from the analytic routine trapped in the polarized splitting of epistemology/ontology, subject/object, and re-

pressive/oppressive have inspired me to rethink the ways in which I interpret media texts. For example, she noted limitations in the transformative potential of a reading practice in literary criticism that she perceived as trapped within a cycle of shame dynamics. As Edwards summarizes,

> Sedgwick has pondered whether the ongoing repetition of shame dynamics might not provide a plausible explanation for why generations of scholars shaming, criticising and exposing various repressive ideologies within a wide variety of texts has not necessarily made our world a significantly less oppressive place. (Edwards, 2008, cited in Johnson 2015, p. 116).

Under the heading of "reparative reading", the researcher first becomes compassionate towards and intimate with the object of analysis, rather than criticizing, judging, and exposing to the object. As I understand it, this is a critical inspection of critical theories, a reimagining of the role of the critic; affect is used as an alternative method for the researcher to approach the object, through reflecting on what experience tells, to "delve deeper into moments and experiences of fracture and surprise" (Moreno-Gabriel & Johnson, 2019, p. 8). I find this approach inspirational when tackling popular texts outside our intellectual structure, especially as critical analysis has reached an impasse in clinging to the "hidden" meanings of the text and emphasizing its repressive implications. As Bruno Latour (2004) also argues, the explanatory structure of critical theory is increasingly similar to that of conspiracy theories, except that the former adopts "more elevated causes—society, discourse, knowledge-slash-power, fields of forces, empires, capitalism—while conspiracists like to portray a miserable bunch of greedy people with dark intents" (p. 229). In contrast, the approach of reparative interpretation no longer assumes the audience to be naive, unable to detect the ideologies manipulated by media, thus orienting researchers towards a close/surface reading with a more humble attitude to the texts, embracing "what is evident, perceptible, apprehensible in texts" (Best & Marcus, 2009, p. 9) by an ethical and affective stance.

To briefly summarize the two approaches to affect – the philosophical and the psychological, despite their use of different theoretical frameworks, their intentions are similar: to extend our analytic attention to focus on embodiment, on lived experiences, on the mundane and subtle forms of power and force. In both cases the turn to affect is far from a return to psychologism or emotivism, but on the contrary, they aim to broaden the scope "from purely psychoanalytic or cognitive model of emotion by recasting affect in the

post-modern political scene" (Hsieh, 2008, p. 230). While their theories equip me with useful concepts and a radically new perspective, I often find myself haunted when reading their works against (post-)structuralism and deconstruction. Certainly, I am not the only one in this regard; in current research there has been a growing tendency to challenge their theoretical assumptions, put forward especially by the intellectual historian Ruth Leys. As a conclusion to this section, I will offer a review of these criticisms and then follow with the social-relational approach of affect for my analysis.

3.2.3 Criticism and discussion

In her analysis, Leys (2011) highlights the firm linkage between these two approaches – namely, their commitment to anti-intentionalism:

> they all share a single belief: the belief that affect is independent of signification and meaning…that there is a gap between the subject's affects and its cognition or appraisal of the affective situation or object, such that cognition or thinking comes 'too late' for reasons, beliefs, intentions, and meanings to play the role in action and behavior usually accorded to them. The result is that action and behavior are held to be determined by affective dispositions that are independent of consciousness and the mind's control. (p. 443).

Leys further argues that the ontological primacy of affect over cognition will lead us to affective determinism, in which human judgments and actions are always primed by affects in a rather unmediated, stimulus-response way. As in the view of Massumi, "the skin is faster than the word" (1995, p. 86); affects emerge automatically and quickly on the surface, so fast that conscious awareness and thought can only do a kind of "post-hoc rumination" (Leys, 2011, p. 443). The latter may monitor the results, but may also fail to catch affects at all. Besides, other scholars such as Papoulias and Callard (2010), and Brinkema (2014) have also criticized such affect scholarship as being flawed with regard to the underlying empirical-experimental evidences. In their view, it often shifted attention away from affects themselves and onto the somatically sensed body, to proprioceptive responses at the molecular level, as if affect were simply material relations between bodies.

Paradoxically, it seems that the turn to affect that once opposed dualism has eventually reproduced the Cartesian dualism between mind and body, only in the reverse order of giving ontological primacy to the body and its affects (Kristensen, 2016). For Gartens (2014), although Massumi claims Spinoza

as a precursor, this reversed body/mind dualism involves a fundamental misreading of Spinoza, since dualism is precisely what Spinoza as a monist tries to avoid in his system. Put differently, the pure intensity (which for Massumi is synonymous with affect) that operates outside meaning and cognition for Spinoza always already involves thinking, but a kind of embodied thinking, not necessarily cognitive thinking. Spinoza insisted that "the thinking substance and the extended substance are one and the same substance, which is now comprehended under this attribute, now under that" (Spinoza cited in Robinson & Kutner, 2019, p. 113).

By clarifying Massumi's theoretical connection to Deleuze and Guattari, Uhlmann (2020) states that Massumian affect theory loses the relationship to the concept of power, making it difficult to develop an effective critique of power. In effect, the autonomous model of affect constrains social scientists' possibilities to empirically analyze affective phenomena. As Wetherell (2015) argues, "it becomes impossible to ask how affective experience might be socially constituted and organized as a particular kind of emotion" (p. 145). If power works "autonomically", bypassing reason and criticality and seizing the body at the level of neural circuits and nervous systems, then any effort of emancipatory transformations aimed at breaking the existing (oppressive) reproductive cycle of social relations seems doomed to be powerless and futile. As an undesirable consequence, the entire history of counter-hegemonic contributions of postcolonial and feminist theorists is ignored (cf. Hemmings, 2005).

In a helpful overview, Grossberg suggests distinguishing between three dimensions (or plateaus) of affect – (1) the ontology of immanence or virtuality, (2) the reality of the actual as affective, and (3) certain modalities of incorporeal effects (2010a, p. 194). According to him, the first two dimensions "describe the virtual and expressive strata" (or *affectio* as an abstract register of intensive force relations), whereas dimension (3) "refers to the multiplicity of regimes, logics, or organizations of intensities or passions (*affectus*) which define the affective tonalities and modalities of existence, behavior, and experience. This is a second articulation of expression" (ibid.). Then viewing from this scheme, the above two approaches seems reductionist in that they usually depend on the conflation of the three different dimensions of affect. As Grossberg critiques Massumi and like-minded scholars for their direct "leap from a set of ontological concepts to a description of an empirical and affective context" (Grossberg, 2010b, p. 314). While others have the problem of

"identify[ing] the ontological sense of capacity with the actualized bodily capacities" (Grossberg, 2010a, p. 195).

Then according to Grossberg, it is this *affectus* – affect in the form of effectivity as "a kind of materialist investment" that has been largely dismissed. He emphasizes that, the dimension of *affectus*, simply irreducible to the ontological category, rather, it is "a system, a particular arrangement…a machinic assemblage that would take on various forms, and could be recognized. A kind of range of possibilities. A virtual realm of machinic assemblages that organize the energy or investment in life" (2010b, p. 312). Therefore, it would be incomplete or insufficient to simply equate affect with the pure intensity which bypasses or exists prior to the symbolic and consider it as the universal ontological nature of reality beyond ordinary experiences.

3.3 The social-relational framework of affect and emotion

It is necessary, here, to introduce the third strand of inquiry to affect that foregrounds the sociality, relationality and situatedness of affect and emotion (Gregg & Seigworth, 2010; Burkitt, 2014; Röttger-Rössler & Slaby, 2018; Kahl, 2019). This is found predominantly in cultural studies, media and communication studies and anthropology, forms part of the theoretical framework of this book, and proposes that,

> [A]ffect is best understood as a matter of dynamic, intensive relations unfolding between human actors in and with complex environmental settings, material formations, (urban) landscapes and designed spaces, various artifacts, technologies and media. (Röttger-Rössler & Slaby, 2018, p. 3).

This represents a more integrated understanding of affect, emotion and the process of meaning-making, emphasizing the interdependence and co-existence between diverse components of affective phenomena. Such an approach agrees with the previous two strands of the "affective turn" in asking for analysis that goes beyond the dominant (post-)structuralist paradigm and "allows in much more of the excessive and transient aspects of living" (Wetherell, 2012, p. 55). Yet it declines to regard affect as a desubjectivizing force that operates outside the economy of the sign. As Grossberg (1992a) argues, affect is trans- or a-subjective, but by no means desubjective,

> Too often, critics assume that affect – as pure intensity – is without form or structure. But it too is articulated and disarticulated – there are affective lines of articulation and affective lines of flight – through social struggles over its structure. The affective plane is organized according to maps which direct people's investments in and into the world. These maps are deployed in relation to the formations in which they are articulated. (p. 82).

Developed by the Collaborative Research Center (CRC) *Affective Societies* in Berlin with a philosophical framework that privileges relationality and ontogeny, this approach then directs our attention from dualistic ways of thinking and dichotomies such as affect/cognition, body/mind, subject/object, etc., and towards the relational dynamics between individuals and in situations. In other words, instead of asking *who* is affecting *whom* in a given situation, this angle on affect calls for a fundamentally sociocultural (and research-amenable) exploration of *how* a relational dynamic of affecting and being affected evolves in such a multiplicity and variety of affective apparatuses and mediations (cf. Slaby & von Scheve, 2019; Kahl, 2019). The focus of attention is on the generative process when the boundaries of individuals and collectives become consolidated or transformed. As Kolehmainen and Juvonen (2018) claim, affects can be sites of change and transformation as well as sites that arrest, stick and solidify. Accordingly, suggested by Fox and Alldred (2017), the objectives of research would be to

> explore how affects draw the material and the cultural, and the 'micro', 'meso' and 'macro' into assembly together…to reveal relations, affects and affect economies in assemblages, the capacities (and limits to capacities) produced in bodies, collectivities and social formations, and the micropolitics of these capacities and limits. (p. 169).

Along this third path, affect is analytically separated from but not diametrically opposed to emotion. It is better to think about them along a continuum, with a (sliding) point of cognition, acknowledgment, or articulation marking their difference (Nelson, 2016). To make it clear, here affect is conceived as "a fundamental 'mode of being' and a continuous bodily orientation towards the world with meaningful evaluative qualities" (von Scheve, 2018, p. 55). Emotion is viewed as the capture, closing, and naming of affect, or as "the ideological attempt to make sense of some affective productions" (Grossberg, 2010b, p. 316). Thus, technically, affect differs from emotion in that it precedes it. Affect is "virtual", always in the process of becoming, and holds as possibility

multiple connections and ways of being (Wetherell, 2012, p. 59). Under certain situations, affect can trigger cyclic chains of feeling in which affects flow into emotions such as hate, jealousy, shame and disgust. But such chains are complex, unpredictable, and indeterminate; affects may not completely enter emotions, because not all affects are realized and conceptualized as socioculturally coded emotions.

In this way the study of affect does not imply that we should discard the understanding of social formations, since affects are always being articulated and contextualized. The point is rather to "go back to things themselves", and to understand affective phenomena in their embeddedness within ongoing complex situations, or in Grossberg's statements, the "'mattering maps', and the various culturally and phenomenological constituted emotional economies" (2010b, p. 316). Such an approach of affect also provides an opportunity to expand the existing understanding of emotion: emotion can be regarded as a sub-component of broader affective encounters that link human bodies to their physical and social environment (Fox, 2015). So understood, it is not physio-psychological *or* sociocultural, but physio-psychological *and* sociocultural; the location of emotion is shifted from the category of psychology and into the entanglement[5] of larger social, political and cultural developments.

Highlighting the interconnection and mutual transformation between affect and emotion, the dynamic-relational approach then makes it possible to include nuanced analysis and conclusions from various perspectives. For this book, works from Margaret Wetherell, Sara Ahmed, and Lawrence Grossberg provide important conceptual tools for capturing both affect and emotion in media texts; they cover a significant area that involves both the psychological and the social.

Embedded in the emerging fields of social psychology and critical discursive psychology, Wetherell (2012) develops the concept of "affective practice," which views affect as an organic complex, "always intersecting and interacting" (p. 24) with the psychosocial. Here, practice can be briefly described as

5 Here, the use of the term entanglement is borrowed from Barad's (2007) work on the co-constitution of matter and meaning, and refers not to "just any old kind of connection, interweaving, or enmeshment in a complicated system" (p. 160), but refer to the "intra-action" of entities in constitutive, transformative and open-ended relations. As Barad states, "Individuals do not preexist their interactions; rather, individuals emerge through and as part of their entangled intra-relating" (Barad, 2007, p. ix).

an embodied, performed, and regulated "set," "nexus," or "array" of "doings and sayings" (Schatzki, 2001, as cited in Reckwitz, 2012, p. 248). One of the strengths of employing the concept of "practice" is to acknowledge that people are both agentic and constituted in actions. Affective practice can be used as a basic analytic unit for social sciences; it is a compelling concept for emotion research because of its potential to capture both patterns and dynamics in the flow of affect. Accordingly, Wiesse (2019) summarized three basic assumptions of the affective practice approach: "(1) Practices are bodily activities. They are thus always already affecting their participants in some way. (2) Practices are inherently public affairs, and their affective dimension is no exception … (3) Practices unfold in a processual manner" (p. 132). Bringing them together leads to an understanding of affect as "a joint, coordinated, relational activity" that helps people navigate everyday social interactions, which already indicates that different practices may intertwine. Then it is important to investigate not just the emotional nature of the specific practice, but also to identify how and why particular "affective practices" are situated, related to and resonate with other practices, emotions, language, discourse and meaning—wider "institutions of intelligibility" (Wetherell, 2012, p. 79).

Ahmed's (2004a, 2004b) work is also concerned with how emotions are relational and are realized socially and collectively. By employing the term "affective economies", she emphasizes what she refers to as the "sociality" of emotions: affect involves but "does not reside in an object or sign, [it] is an effect of the circulation between objects and signs (= the accumulation of affective value)" (Ahmed, 2004a, p. 45). Thus affect works like capital, adding value through circulation, exchange and sharing, and the subject is a nodal point in the process. Her analytical focus is not on the circulation of emotions, but on the movement (or what she calls "surfacing") between people and things, signs and bodies, and the accumulation of "affective value" over time as an effect. Ahmed (2004b) writes,

> In such affective economies, emotions do things, and they align individuals with communities—or bodily space with social space—through the very intensity of their attachments. Rather than seeing emotions as psychological dispositions, we need to consider how they work, in concrete and particular ways, to mediate the relationship between the psychic and the social, and between the individual and the collective. (p. 119)

Based on this Ahmed describes how emotions are produced by "sticking" to objects and how they circulate, which involve orientations towards others and

the definition of identities. In this "stickiness" a group is constituted as a collective, the "impressions" of "surfaces and boundaries" that differentiate it from others are produced, and the types of relationships with other people and environments are shaped. Therefore this approach to affect, especially affective economies, has implications for opening the dynamic process of how subjectivities are constituted.

Grossberg (1992a, 2010b) uses the notion "mattering maps" to identify how affect moves individuals to action, and how affect shapes the contours of social as well as bodily space. As he argues, "the image of mattering maps points to the constant attempt, whether or not it is ever successful, to organize moments of stable identity, sites at which we can, at least temporarily, find ourselves 'at home' with what we care about" (Grossberg, 1992b, p. 60). It is through the affective demanding on difference that identity and power principles are invested in, and together, they interpellate individuals to invest themselves in certain cultural forms and practices. For Grossberg, the entanglement of affect, ideology, and power constitutes a network of empowerment, which he refers to as an "affective alliance": "an organisation of concrete material practices and events, cultural forms and social experience which both opens up and structures the space of our affective investments in the world" (1997, p. 44). In a similar vein, Gandhi (2006) uses the term "affective community" to capture the empowering power of affect to disrupt existing power relations. Instead of aligning oneself with members who share the same nationality or identity, the constitution of affective communities calls for an "affective cosmopolitanism", which has the potential to form a "co-belonging of nonidentical singularities" (p. 24).

These theorizations of affect show that affect and emotion are not simply generated from "within" or from external social structures; instead, they gain power in the interaction and connection between the psychic and the social, and between the individual and the collective. It is therefore instructive to locate affect and the potentiality it attaches to popular media in the light of Deleuze's (2013) concept of the "double-movement of liberation and capture" (p. 72). Affect – the "virtual" – is liberated from and again captured in the actual, it is a continual passage. As a whole, this third strand of affect theories orients our attention to view affect as unfolding in social-relational dynamics "in the midst of things and relations (in immanence) and, then, in the complex assemblages that come to compose bodies and worlds simultaneously" (Seigworth & Gregg, 2010, p. 6).

3.4 Understanding reality TV: relational affect as a critical optic

In general, the terms affect, emotion, feeling, and mood are differentiated, and each of them are discussed differently according to different theoretical approaches and research objects. But there is increasing agreement on the entanglement of biology and culture in processing the emotional. Taking the strength of relational affect, my analysis is performed along this orientation and aims to promote our understandings of complex emotional processes. The point is that affect is not solely the bodily-sensual states of an individual, but also involves normative and performative aspects. Social norms and display rules not only dictate how one should express their emotions, but also inform people of what can be felt and how to feel, and can facilitate or curb sensory experiences. However, affect includes embodied experiences that move beyond the codification, consolidation or capture of the Symbolic; it is something that is fluid, amorphous, and lived from moment to moment. In this sense, the turn to affect along the approach of relational affect has foregrounded alternative ways to theorize the psychic and the social as interrelated, and points to a dynamism that recognizes bodily matter in relationality and their entanglements with historical, cultural, social and political practices. Based on this, in this section, I will further discuss how to theorize affect and emotion in the specific mediated settings of reality TV.

In this book, I propose that reality TV can be thought of as a unique social laboratory to investigate the working of affects and emotions, not only for empirical and practical reasons, but for theoretical and ontological concerns as well. Reality TV offers a fertile ground for a huge diversity and amount of emotional communications and creates intimate relations across the screen. The emergence of reality TV can be viewed as a signifier of contemporary "emotional culture". As Lawrence Grossberg (1992a) points out, "The terrain of commercial popular culture is the primary space where affective relationships are articulated; the consumer industries increasingly appeal not only to ideological consensus, but to the contemporary structures of affective needs and investments" (p. 85).

I therefore view reality TV as a perfect platform to explore specific mediated modes of affective realizations and conceptualizations. Instead of viewing the (excessive) emotions in reality TV as a sign of the further decline in morality and social responsibility in popular culture, I take a step back, suspend moral and value judgements, and view these emotions as opportunities to reveal the affective-meaning-making mechanism of reality TV, which

is both closely related to and operates beyond cognitive, representative, or ideological interpellations. This also means that I view emotions as both an integral part of the sociocultural–media construction and an expression of affective intensity and force; the two are not isolated from each other but integrated in the relational dynamics of affecting and being affected. Put differently, as a product of the cultural industry, reality TV is obviously artificial and often constructs dramatic settings or uses post-production to maximize (or avoid) certain kinds of emotional performances, yet the complex communicative modalities of television (see Chapter 5.2.2 for details) lead to great uncertainty between the emotional expressions as performed and represented in reality TV, the affective potential afforded by aesthetics, form and temporality, and the actual emotional reactions in the audience. Together, these constitute reality TV's complex affective communicative system.

While emotions can be found both in the media text and in the audience, this book concentrates more on the former: how emotions are performed, represented, and built in the 19-season program *X-Change*, and how TV texts may provoke emotional reactions in audiences.[6] Oriented by the relational approach, I view emotions in televisual texts as a distinctive affective–discursive practice: it is *performative*, *discursively constructed* through televisual narratives, enacted through audiovisual technologies, and may accumulate *collective* and *political* implications through articulation, circulation, and contagion. In this way, affect studies in new materialism (see Chapter 3.2) and theories from sociology of emotions (cf. Hochschild, 1975, 1983; Burkitt, 1997, 2014; Turner &

6 It should be noted that the emotional reaction in audiences is discussed in a hypothetical, discreet way under the presupposition that reality TV invites the audience to feel (Smith, 2003), based on the four-level model that distinguishes emotional reactions into perceptual affects, diegetic emotions, thematic emotions, and communicative emotions (Eder, 2008). However, without a solid audience survey, this study cannot answer questions concerning the actual emotional responses of real audiences. From existing research, media psychology has conducted many empirical analyses focusing on the role of emotions in media reception and effects (cf. Nabi, 2009; Döveling et al., 2011; Konijn, 2013). For entertainment media, interested readers can refer to Zillmann and his colleagues, who developed several theories to explain the entertainment experience in communication processes, including Affective Disposition Theory (1977), Mood Management Theory (1988), and Empathy Theory (2006). In general, media effects studies locate emotion in individuals and essentially consider it as part of internal psychological and cognitive processing; yet the laboratory conditions in these media experiments and the individual-oriented approach made contextual clues difficult to be analytically included.

Stets, 2005; Turner, 2009) are incorporated: emotions in reality TV are fundamentally relational, realized in the interactions of individuals, the media, and sociocultural-historical contexts. I do not assume that emotions are purely socially, culturally, and politically constructed and do not exist outside discursive constructions; instead, I accept the corporeal, dynamic, and ambivalent nature of affect. It is important to reflect on the analysis, so that it is not limited to current explanatory structures, models, or patterns.

Concretely, first of all, emotion is *performative* in televisual texts, in that it is based on the performance of participants, with rules set in advance by the production team. What concerns me is not whether the emotional expressions of the participants are authentic, but that they are always about something: identity, morality, aesthetics, community, etc. Drawing on a dramaturgical view of emotions (Goffman, 1959; Hochschild, 1983), I consider that emotions are verbally and physically performed by participants in the constant back-and-forth between onstage and backstage. Based on this, I ask how emotions gain value through circulation, what modes of association are produced between subjects, objects, and signs, and to what extent they conform to or deviate from cultural scripts.

Secondly, emotion is *discursively constructed* through the televisual narrative. This means that emotions in the program are not viewed as participants' internal psychological states but as mediated emotional expressions that have been filtered by televisual interpretations, situated in the routine practice of television production, and thus are inherently ideologically implicated. This draws on Foucault's work on governmentality (more specifically, scholars' extension of his work; see D'Aoust, 2014), and Gilles Deleuze's writings on the control society, which view emotion as a tool for discursive and corporeal discipline. In this case, emotions as mediated through television narratives cannot be uncoupled from the power relations that characterize and permeate the social realm.

Thirdly, emotion is enacted through audiovisual technologies, which means that reality TV not only *narrates*, but also *registers* the emotional through semiotic and aesthetic techniques, allowing for viewers' affective and embodied engagement. Film theories, especially cognitive and phenomenological film theories, offer analytical resources to explore how films, or, in a broader sense, audiovisual moving images, use narrative, rhetorical, visual, audio or other means to manage the audience experience. For instance, Greg Smith's (2003) "mood-cue" approach assumes that films do not consistently generate emotions but rather diffuse broad moods through

so-called "emotion cues." With the coordinated work of multiple emotion cues, the film as a whole creates a strong emotion or a mood orientation. Other scholars, such as Vivian Sobchack (1991, 2004), Laura Marks (2000, 2002), and Jennifer Barker (2009), focus on the concept of "embodiment," which is also analytically helpful in encouraging scholars to think about affective phenomena as a whole, rather than being separated by categories such as emotion, feeling, or mood.

Fourthly, emotion is *collective* and *political* in that emotion includes value judgements about how individual and society should be, and accumulates its political potential in performance and communication. This perspective is based on appraisal theory, which assumes that emotion is elicited by appraising situations, acts, or events (Scherer et al., 2001). A private, individual emotion comes to matter collectively (and is qualitatively changed) when it is articulated with similar appraisals, dispositions, intentions, concerns, and moral values, leading to convergence in emotional response (Nussbaum, 2001; Parkinson et al., 2005; von Scheve & Ismer, 2013). Meanwhile, emotion becomes political when it communicates shared claims for justice and social change. It is through the work of emotion that abstract political ideas become close and even tangible, or as in Nussbaum's (2013) concept of the politics of emotions, creates "a sense of 'our' life in which these people and events matter as part of our 'us', our own flourishing" (p. 11). The analysis emphasis oriented by this perspective is placed on the tension between transforming the potential of emotions and the practice of power that seeks to condition and regulate specific ways of feeling, expressing and enacting emotions.

To sum up, integrating the above understandings of affect and emotion, I aim not only to capture the broad and diverse presence of emotions in reality TV but also to locate them as an integral part of the cultural and political claims that are mediated by narrative forms, professional codes, discursive patterns, aesthetics and technological affordances. Put differently, a relational approach of affect accordingly calls for the focus to be placed on investigating specific scenes or "locations" of emotions, including their social, material and technological settings and with an awareness of the role of power. The socially and culturally constructed emotional expressions staged in reality TV are not individual traits, but rather a collective realization of the mediated politics that is affectively produced in the formation of an emotional culture. Thus, reality TV offers a platform for us not only to explore how "structure of feelings" (Williams, 1961) is represented, but also to ask how these feelings – driven by the affective network – engage and create individual psychologi-

cal and bodily responses, articulate with ideologies and identities, and shape social action. Reality TV itself acts as a productive "affective generator" (Reckwitz 2017, p. 123) that participates actively in power relations and social processes, and helps to constitute them.

The epistemological shift, when looking at reality TV and media trends in general, is a transition to rethink how reality TV matters in contemporary societies and cultures. Through continuous affective (re)production, reality TV constitutes a form of repetition wherein affects circulate, and the memories and histories of encounters between racialized, gendered, nationalized, and otherwise differentiated bodies accumulate. It is important to explore the mediated emotion and dynamic relationships that produce these repetitions and differences. Following the inventive logics of "difference and becoming" (Deleuze, 1994) rather than merely the structural-functional approach of "being and identity", reality TV, then, is not located on a broadcast model between production and reception, rather, is analyzed as the communication system in dynamism that articulates "between the nervous, technical, and social system which constitute the total human fact" (Stiegler, 2006). Thus the optic of affect not only draws our attention to the depth of texts, but also the flatness, networks and relationality: the surface.

This is not simply to abandon the work of representative and ideological paradigms, but instead, to build on their foundations, investigating the complex processes of affective mediation in ways that discursive and non-(or more than) discursive elements are co-constituted and organized immanently in material assemblages. In this way the relational affect offers a hopeful alternative to social structuralism, by positioning subjects and objects not in a binary opposition, but in the becoming process where they are constituted through their relationality. Therefore, the mechanism of ideological hegemony is not simply understood as working through representation and discourse, but through affective investment in specific "conjunctures" (Grossberg, 1996). I will elaborate on this further in the methods section of Chapter 5. In what follows I will offer a literature review of the research on reality TV with regard to the analysis of affects and emotions.