

Guest Editors' Introduction

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There is a long-standing tradition of binary or dichotomous thinking when outlining matters in terms of opposites such as good/bad, true/ false, reason/passion, religion/science, etc. Dichotomies seem to be widely used in present-day language and societies, although their use has been criticised mainly because they are associated with dominance or privilege (Elbow 1993). Even if classification is something natural and important to develop cognitive abilities, it can lead to dichotomous thinking. By contrasting two things, one implicitly creates a hierarchy based on the assumption that one of the two elements is more important than the other. This idea was central in structuralism and was later criticised (for example, Foucault and Derrida, in Robbins 2015) because there are many other nuances to be considered in between opposites (hot-cold, soft-hard, day-night, brightness-darkness). By accepting binary thinking, one risks building barriers between groups of people and determine that one group is superior to the other by spreading discrimination and prejudice towards the other group(s). Over time, societies started to classify individuals or groups of people in various forms of opposites (Black/ White, gay/straight, male/female), which are difficult to eradicate.