

The Affective Turn and Madness: An Exploration of the Relationship between Emotions and Subjectivity¹

El giro afectivo y la locura, un nexo entre emociones y subjetividad

Carolina Y. Andrada-Zurita²

Artículo recibido en septiembre 16 de 2025; artículo aceptado en diciembre 9 de 2025

Este artículo puede compartirse bajo la [Licencia Creative Commons Atribución-NoComercial-CompartirIgual 4.0 Internacional](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/) y se referencia usando el siguiente formato: Andrada-Zurita, C.Y. (2025). El giro afectivo y la locura: una exploración de la relación entre emociones y subjetividad. *I+D Revista de Investigaciones*, 21(1), 1–13.

Abstract

This article addresses the concept of Affective turn and its relevance in understanding emotions and subjectivity in contemporary society. Through the analysis of contributions by authors such as Leonor Arfuch, Sara Ahmed and Judith Butler, it is analyzed how the Affective turn challenges traditional notions of emotion and reason, and stresses the importance of considering emotions as a key aspect of human experience and subjectivity. It also discusses how this approach can be applied to reinterpret insanity and mental illness, and presents new perspectives for understanding the relationship between emotions, politics and society.

Keywords: affective turn, emotions, subjectivity, reason, madness.

Resumen

El presente artículo aborda el concepto del Giro afectivo y su relevancia en la comprensión de las emociones y la subjetividad en la sociedad contemporánea. A través del análisis de las contribuciones de autores como Leonor Arfuch, Sara Ahmed y Judith Butler, se analiza cómo el Giro afectivo desafía las nociones tradicionales de la emoción y la razón, y destaca la importancia de considerar las emociones como un aspecto clave de la experiencia humana y la subjetividad. Asimismo, se discute cómo este enfoque puede ser aplicado para reinterpretar la locura y la enfermedad mental, y se presentan nuevas perspectivas para la comprensión de la relación entre las emociones, la política y la sociedad.

Palabras clave: giro afectivo, emociones, subjetividad, razón, locura.

Introduction

The study of emotions and subjectivity has gained great importance in the social sciences in recent decades, particularly since the 1990s with the emergence of the so-called "affective turn". This innovative approach seeks to understand the complex relationship between emotions, subjectivity and politics. In this context, as authors such as Leonor Arfuch and Sara Ahmed put it, emotions are no longer understood as mere physiological reactions, but as a way of understanding the deeper reality and as a way of

knowing. It should be noted that various thinkers have approached the issue of *affective turn* from different perspectives, emphasizing the importance of considering emotions as a way to understand the deepest reality and relate to the world, and emphasizing the relationship between emotions and the construction of subjectivity, as Judith Butler and Lauren Berlant do. In the present work, we seek to deepen our understanding of affective turn and its relationship with madness, analyzing how emotions and subjectivity are built and experienced in different

¹ Article type: reflection article. It does not have sources.

² Last degree obtained Bachelor of International Relations (previously Bachelor of Philosophy by the Universidad Nacional del Sur), Universidad Empresarial Siglo 21 (UES21). Research group "Anger and compassion: Hannah Arendt and Chantal Mouffe on the affects in contemporary democracies", Universidad Nacional del Sur (Bahía Blanca, Argentina) Address: 12 de octubre y San Juan, PBX: 0291 459-5150. ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7870-4188>. Institutional email: carolina.andrada@uns.edu.ar. Credit: investigation.

contexts. To do this, we will analyze the relationship between the affective turn and madness, examine the theoretical positions of various authors on the subject and develop a deeper understanding of madness from a

Theoretical approaches to affective turn

In recent decades, precisely since the 1990s, the study of emotions and subjectivity has taken on great importance in the social sciences, and one of the approaches that has emerged in this context is the so-called "affective turn". It focuses on understanding the complex relationship between emotions, subjectivity and politics, showing a new way of understanding reality, which is understood to have been presented in a biased manner.

In this context, emotions will become important in studies about the relationship between subjects, their environment, existence and the world. Precisely in the way people experience this world and the understanding they develop from it. In his article *The "affective turn". Emotions, subjectivity and politics* (2016),³ Leonor Arfuch, states that the affective turn is based on different theories such as: Lacanian psychoanalysis, theories about subjectivity, Feminist theory, the body theory in relation to studies of political theory, what generates "a resurgence of an economy of emotions" (Arfuch, 2016, p. 11).⁴

The work of Leonor Arfuch is undoubtedly fundamental to understanding the affective turn in the context of social sciences, highlighting the importance of considering emotions as a key aspect of human experience and subjectivity. It is also possible to point out that this approach presents in an innovative way the traditional opposite pairs: emotion/reason and discourse/affection, emphasizing on the complexity existing between the link linking power, emotion and subjectivity in political theory (Arfuch, 2016).

Thus, the affective turn represents an innovative approach in the study of emotions and subjectivity, which seeks to understand how emotions are constructed and experienced in different social and cultural contexts. The affective turn allows us to highlight the importance of emotions in the way subjectivity is built, as well as social experience. It should be remembered that in the reading by Marta Rizo García (2004) on *The biographical space. Dilemmas of contemporary subjectivity* by Leonor Arfuch (2002), highlights not only the question of experience, but also the relationship that senses have with it:

perspective that considers emotions and subjectivity as fundamental in the construction of social and cultural reality.

From the Hegelian background to Husserl, Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty, a bridge is drawn between experience as an apprehension of the environment through the senses (external experience) and experience as a experience of the world by the subject in its sensory and symbolic dimensions (internal experience). (Rizo García, 2004, p. 234)

This allows us, in turn, to go a little further and think about the role that emotions have in the way subjects relate to their environment, to the world. In this way, emotions are understood much more than as mere physiological reactions of our body to certain stimuli, but as a way of understanding the deeper reality, that is, they constitute a way of knowing. Because of this, and following Arfuch (2016), we can say that emotions can even be used as a political tool that influences both the decision-making by those in power and public opinion itself.

Sara Ahmed, for her part, in her book *The cultural politics of emotions* (2015), will also link emotions to politics in a certain way, since she will point out that existing power structures can be sustained by them. Like Arfuch, he will argue that it is possible to influence public opinion through one's own emotions shaped by cultural and normative practices. According to this assumption, emotions do not constitute mere internal states that occur in subjects but are found in circulation and exchange in society, thus equating them with an accumulative capital, hence introducing the concept of "emotional economy".

Sara Ahmed's theory of emotions is of great relevance to our research, since it highlights the importance of considering emotions as a form of social capital that can be accumulated and used to maintain and challenge existing power structures. In this context, emotions can have a dual impact on society as they can foster social cohesion and belonging but also lead to marginalization and exclusion. It follows that emotions are linked to the constitution of identity in subjects. Therefore, in these terms we can say that emotions not only link the subjects with each other and with the community, but also shape their identities.

For this reason, Ahmed adds to his proposal a specific criticism of the fact that sometimes attempts are made to promote either inclusion or tolerance by addressing emotions or what he calls precisely "liberal politics"

³ Although the titles of works are translated throughout the text for better understanding, they appear in their original language in the list of references.

⁴ From now on, all quotations in Spanish are translated into English by the author. This clarification is made because the original text was written in Spanish, primarily using works in that language

(Ahmed, 2015, p. 219), which we believe could be renamed "liberal emotional politics". The criticism lies mainly in the fact that the author considers that this type of manipulation only serves to give permanence to existing power structures and even to silence certain subjects.

Sara Ahmed's contributions to the theory of emotions are given from her own critique of the situation in the contemporary world. In his work *The Promise of Happiness* (2010), he will focus on how subjects seek happiness through them, a question that is related to what he raises in *Willful Subjects* (2014), where he addresses emotions, but already thinking about the subjects and their experience in the world and the links with them. The treatment of emotions is also given in *On Being Included: Racism and Diversity in Institutional Life* (2012), where it not only analyzes and relates emotions to the idea of difference, diversity and inclusion as well expresses its title, but also addresses the issue of institutional alienation, which is useful for our research.

Judith Butler is another thinker who also tackles the issue of emotions. In his book *Gender trouble* (1990), he does so by linking them with gender, or rather with the way in which it is constructed, a question that is also addressed in *Undoing Gender* (2004). In *Bodies that Matter* (2010), she focuses on the way emotions constitute ways of living and experiencing the body. *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence* (2004), highlights the link between people's emotions and vulnerability, which sometimes leads to a certain precariousness in life. Therefore, emotions, in this context, make visible the most fragile, but also the most violent part of the subjects. Butler then provides two points that are relevant to our research, the construction of gender and vulnerability in the context of the study of emotions.

Another figure associated with the *affective turn*, cultural and feminist studies is the American Lauren Berlant, who knew how to properly combine the concepts of affection, intimacy and cruel optimism in her theorizing. In Berlant's terms, affection stands as a way of understanding the relationship between feelings and emotions with other aspects of life such as culture and politics. In the same way, intimacy will be thought of as a binding link between people and society, which is nurtured through the latter and sustained by certain customs and cultural standards. Finally, through the idea of cruel optimism characterizes the fact that subjects cling to an ideal of happiness and security to which they aspire and pursue in their lives exhaustively, which can be counterproductive and detrimental to their own lives.

With regard to Berlant's works dealing with the *affective turn*, we find *Intimacy* (2000), a book that

addresses the link between affectivity and intimacy itself, focusing on how people establish and maintain intimate relationships in a world that presents itself as a scenario devoid of emotional connections and more ephemeral ties. In *The Female Complaint: The Unfinished Business of Sentimentality in American Culture* (2008b), for its part, it examines the way in which women have been thought and assumed over time as a being of a sentimental and affective nature, which was undoubtedly an excuse used to exclude her from the public space. Finally, another work highlighted in relation to the above theme is *Cruel Optimism* (2011), which addresses the previously mentioned concept of cruel optimism, which highlights the existing link between politics and affectivity, focusing on the attachment that people have with a certain fantasy of security and happiness that is sometimes harmful by the unreality that places them in wanting to get at all costs.

Berlant's point of criticism is that cruel optimism can be used to justify and sustain the relations of domination and power which have been established over time and which are intended to perpetuate themselves in a certain way, what is evident in different spheres of life such as politics, work and love.

In addition to the three works mentioned above, we must add an article published in 2008, entitled *Thinking About Feeling Historical*, in which the author delves into the relationship between affects and historicity, focusing on the fact that feelings and emotions can be used as tools to establish analyses around historical events. Without doubt, affects have been present throughout time in the various human interactions and events that occurred, despite being studied effectively only in recent decades.

Finally, we must highlight the studies of a last figure that we have chosen, who although not included among the many who address the question of *affective turn*, has made great contributions in an indirect way, although, Berlant the reference in his own studies. We are talking about the American Chela Sandoval, a distinguished professor and researcher of postcolonial feminism. Two of his researches are significant according to the survey we have been carrying out, *U.S. Third World Feminism: The Theory and Method of Oppositional Consciousness in the Postmodern World* (1991) and *Methodology of the Oppressed* (2000). In the first, it highlights the importance of considering affections and emotions in the configuration of political identities. While in the second, it focuses on how oppressed communities overcome the violence suffered by those who hold power, exerting some resistance emanating from the emotions that pass through them and that, In turn, they

enable them to claim themselves as a community aspiring to freedom.

As other figures did in their research, it can be seen that emotions are not disconnected from the political sphere. Emotions go beyond the private plane to a certain domain in the public plane, where there are collective interactions.

Although neither the authors analyzed nor their works exhaust the theme of the *affective turn*, they do serve to introduce us into the question and be able to understand the relevance that it has to make an approach from this type of study, on the problematic through which our research.

New perspectives in the social sciences

As pointed out in the previous section, since the 1990s there has been a change of perspective on the way in which affections and emotions are studied in various disciplines such as psychology, sociology, philosophy, anthropology and cultural studies. Thus, this new treatment given to affections and emotions allows us to highlight their importance in relation to our own human experience, as well as in the way in which social reality is constructed. As a result, there have also been major changes in the way conceptualizations such as identity, subjectivity, politics, the link between individual and society, etc., are developed.

The *affective turn*, then, brings with it a certain change of perspective in the way reality is interpreted, which allows a criticism to be generated towards reason and objectivity, since it is considered that they are no longer the only criteria for understanding reality. This, in turn, leads to the fact that just as an objectivist approach is dispensed with, so too is generality, so that individual subjectivity and experience will take on a new value in these studies. Thus, given the importance attached to emotions in relation to human experience and the construction of social reality, the relationship between the individual and society is resignified, and it is emphasized how emotions establish a link between them. In terms of Ahmed (2015):

Emotions are not simply something that "I" or "we" have, but rather, through them, or the way in which we respond to objects and others, surfaces or boundaries are created: "I" and "us" are shaped by -and even take the form of- contact with others. (p.34)

However, if we refer to studies such as that of Brian Massumi (1995), we can see how the author clearly shapes the role played by affections in reinterpretations made around culture and society. Hence it points out that the affection as such, acts as an autonomous force

that acts beyond the meanings and narratives that have been installed or built over time. This involves carrying out reconsiderations in relation to the traditional notion of subjectivity, since affection influences the way in which subjective experience is given. It also highlights the importance of corporality in affective experience, because affection is experienced only in the body.

In the same line, Kosofsky Sedgwick in his work *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity* (2003), links the idea of affection and performativity, posing like Massumi to affection as a force, in this case that produces and transforms social relations and identities. It also relates affection to pedagogy, since it argues that through it it is possible to achieve a certain understanding of the same. It is thus possible to study affection from and in the educational area, where it can be observed that educators have a prominent role, because they are responsible for creating and configuring appropriate, optimal and affective spaces for carrying out learning. Finally, Kosofsky Sedgwick explores shame as a type of affection that can be productive and transformative, rather than the commonly associated negative streak. For this author, shame has some utility to better understand how identities are formed and how power dynamics are given and executed.

These specific questions, in both authors, make clear the disruptions and variations that are generated in the different theorists, as a result of the paradigm shift. It should be remembered that, as Kuhn rightly points out in his work *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (1962), science advances through periods of normal science, which are interrupted by scientific revolutions leading to paradigm shifts. And with the term paradigm, Kuhn refers to the set of theories, values, beliefs and techniques shared by a given scientific community, which shape their approach and the methods they have to employ in their research.

The purpose of the paradigms, then, is to be able to provide a framework for scientific research, facilitating scientists' approach and study of phenomena and problems in a structured, systematic and coherent way. With regard to scientific progress, we must say that:

It is conceived as a linear development based on the accumulation of knowledge. To explain the changes, emphasis is placed on certain very specific moments when experiments or discoveries occur that verify or falsify a scientific theory. Changes occur as these events occur, perfectly located in time, but happening without any observable regularity. The scientists who make discoveries are thus responsible for progress,

since they gradually refine the scientific description of the world. Kuhn objected to this conception, arguing that scientific progress is a non-linear process that does not involve an accumulation of knowledge and does not necessarily imply that better theories follow the theories that were abandoned. (Laguna et al., 2016, pp. 51-52)

From the above it follows that Kuhn's philosophy of science history focuses on the conception that science is not an objective and cumulative search for truth, but rather a set of paradigms which follow one another and replace each other. Each of them delimits and defines a set of assumptions, objectives and methods that guide scientific research (Daros, 2007). On the question of truth, Bird (2012) will highlight the link that Kuhn establishes between this and science, emphasizing how paradigm shifts can lead to new perspectives around truth.

Therefore, the paradigm changes account for two major characteristics that we must take into account: incommensurability and gestaltic changes. Immeasurability refers to the fact that there is no common measure by which new and old paradigms can be directly compared. Whereas gestaltic changes refer to the changes in understanding and perception of the world after changing a paradigm, that is, the new look that is adopted in front of the phenomenon and the world in general.

Scientific knowledge, then, will be regarded as provisional and, as Popper (1980) rightly points out, subject to revision. This means that scientific theories can be modified or refuted, due to the incorporation of new data, which in turn make it possible to construct new theories.

All this, applied to the social sciences, allows us to understand how certain perspectives have changed in relation to certain problems, which also applies to studies linked to psychology and psychiatry, incorporating a gender perspective into the analysis carried out in recent decades.

The role of emotions in human experience

The *affective turn* allows a reinterpretation of the role that emotions have not only in the social but also in the political level, since for a long time they were not considered as they should or even manipulated to achieve certain ends. This means that, in various contexts, the interference of emotions in human interactions and even with society in general has been underestimated. With regard to the manipulation of women's rights, it should be noted that this was done in order to achieve a certain degree of social control, and the main targets of this action were the female population, whom it was intended to control and

silence; responding to the patriarchal structures that have been maintained over time, where women occupied a secondary place, taking away any possibility of holding power.

Undoubtedly, this place in which women are placed is a product of the social construction of femininity itself and the characteristics that it comprises result, in turn, from socialization between peers and with their opposites, and also from established education. Women are not less rational than men or inherently emotional, but beyond being prejudged in this way they have also been conditioned to be so. In the terms of Carole Pateman (1995), these dynamics occur within the framework of patriarchal society, which is based on a sexual contract, which establishes male domination over female and self-supplies through coercion and, as mentioned above, also of socialization. Patriarchal society is then the reason for women's oppression and submission (Lerner, 1986) and inferiorizing them or attributing some kind of weakness to them is useful in this context to maintain control over them.

In view of the above, it is clear that the idea that unfailingly associates women with emotions as if they were a part of their nature, realizing that through these they make visible their weakest and most vulnerable side. Recall that, as Simone de Beauvoir (2018) points out, women have been characterized as the "other" in relation to men, which led to their exclusion and oppression. And in this characterization of the "other" that has been realized, it is linked to nature and emotions, while man is associated with culture and reason, which has given him greater benefits and social positioning.

Hence that men are not associated with emotions, because they are thought of as strong beings, determined and endowed with great rationality. In contrast, women for centuries were seen almost as an ornament of the household, so their opinion on certain matters was not considered or even allowed to speak about certain issues. The wife had an obligation to accompany her husband, if he had one, and to ensure the continuity of his lineage. Adopting critical thinking, debating and questioning were not actions that were allowed, remember that for a long time not even learning to read was allowed, so the most appropriate thing left for the woman was her ability to feel and express feelings. However, these had to be controlled in some way, because if he altered them and made them rebellious they would become a problem for both his family and society itself.

Now, according to these "beliefs," and we say "beliefs", since there was no verifiable knowledge that the emotions were primarily of women or a source of weakness for anyone who leaned towards them,

Emotions and feelings were perceived as negative, hindering good reasoning and decision-making in general. However, with the passage of time, it is proved that feelings are physiological responses to certain stimuli experienced by human beings in general, not only women. From there, little by little, it begins to be accepted that feelings play an important role in the life of human beings, that is, feelings become emotions, allow not only to establish links between subjects, but they shape their own identity. In addition, to be part of the experience that connects them with the world around them.

Because of this, emotions account for a role they have on the social plane and at the same time in other planes that make up human life. Thus, for example, on the medical plane, more precisely in its psychological and psychiatric aspect, re-evaluating the role of emotions allows an analysis from a different perspective, not only of mental illnesses as is the case of insanity, but also of the patients and the treatments to be carried out in order to achieve a cure or, at least, to alleviate the pains or sufferings, if this did not exist.

As far as emotions are concerned, in this context, it is worth highlighting the studies carried out by Edwards (1999), who pointed out the need to carry out an analysis of emotional discourse in order to understand how emotions were expressed and attributed. This, undoubtedly, is of great relevance in our research, since it allows us to understand the role that emotions had in hysterical patients, who did not realize their vulnerability precisely but how they connected with their environment.

In the same line, Ahmed in *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (2015), leads us to ask how emotions and affection interfere with the approach between certain people, as well as the distance from others, between the interactions generated between them. Specifically, Ahmed will propose the following question: How do experiences of pain shape contact with others? (Ahmed, 2015, p. 47). Emotional pain, like other types of stimuli, undoubtedly influences the subjects' actions and reactions. Beyond any vulnerability that this may present, in the words of Bella (2022), "we understand the vulnerable body not as a particular substantiality of a group or a specific body but rather as a relational and affective issue," which is ultimately peculiar to each subject. However, we can say that beyond the experience of pain, sadness, happiness or emotion experienced is individual, since it particularly passes through each body and therefore affects in a unique way every psyche, does not imply that it does not replicate in some way its environment and links with its peers. Understanding how the modes of affect are constructed in subjects, allows us to understand the phenomena that go through them.

While pain is not an emotion in itself, it can trigger emotional responses such as sadness or anger, which leads to changes in subjects' behavior. Thus, a person affected by pain becomes vulnerable to it and experiences variations in his or her behavior, which can affect the way he or she interacts with others.

This undoubtedly reflects a situation which is contemporary to us, but which can also be extrapolated to the time of Charcot and his studies. Recall the case of Augustine, the star patient in the studies on hysteria of the French neurologist, who, following his painful experiences, experienced episodes of sadness and also anger, which were interpreted as symptoms of hysteria. However, if we analyse it from a non-judgmental point of view, it could simply be episodes in which mood changes were given, the product of a very strong stimulus that triggered it.

Let us recall that Augustine was the youngest patient to be admitted to the *Salpêtrière*, being a teenager very aware of her actions and very intelligent, to the point of being functional to the institution and to the dramatized sessions that they held in it to make visible the symptomatology and stages proper to hysteria. Augustine participated in these events in order to obtain certain privileges and in return collaborated with the mission of Charcot. The exhibition of which Augustine was part, can be understood as a dramatization that is made of madness, where a staging of the symptoms and stages of hysteria takes place, that they want to show other specialists who make themselves present at the *Salpêtrière* on specific days.

This undoubtedly accounts for the weak scientific support of the theory that was being tried to prove, which if not by these sessions became completely untenable. It also highlights the demeaning treatment of patients who were exposed as objects at a fair. This interaction between science and theater is recovered in an extensive work by Didi-Huberman on the visual representation of his work *Invention of Hysteria. Charcot and the photographic iconography of the Salpêtrière* (2022).

At this point, when demonstrative representations of hysteria are carried out with patients, it can be observed that these, whether we are talking about Augustine or any of the other patients, become an instrument for science, an object stripped of all feeling. This, combined with all the above points, leads us to think that the focus of study should undoubtedly be on emotions and affections in order to understand how through these patients were linked with their environment, both prior to their entry into the institution, as well, after being admitted. It is recorded as mentioned in chapter 2 of this study, that in most cases once admitted to the hospital their condition did not improve, but on the contrary, worsened

significantly, This is an issue which we shall deal with in the following section, dealing with new interpretations of insanity from a gender perspective.

Emotions, subjectivity and social relations

Since the revaluation and reinterpretation of emotions through the *affective turn*, it is possible to note certain theoretical and practical implications that these have in the field of social sciences. Thus, Bedoya-Dorado and Molina-Valencia in his 2021 article entitled *The study of emotions from affective turn to affective practices and atmospheres*, It shows how language as a constructor of reality reveals the link between emotions and relational links between individuals and society. In the words of the authors, what is known as discursive psychology of emotions began to focus their studies on the use that was made of emotions in speech and how it affected the framework of relationships (Bedoya-Dorado and Molina-Valencia, 2021). Without a doubt, we are dealing here with the transition from what is known as a linguistic turn to an ontological turn, the *affective turn*. This transition makes it possible to highlight the role that emotions play in various interactions, expanding not only their conceptualization but also their scope, which could be understood as a redefinition of emotions.

Now, beyond knowing the biological character that emotions possess, it should also be considered its cultural vein, since emotions are understood as social and discursive constructions (Belli e Íñiguez-Rueda, 2008), which are inevitably conditioned by communication and language itself. The latter in terms of Ibáñez (1992), is crucial, since through him and the symbolic dynamics, one builds reality itself.

On the other hand, thanks to the *affective turn*, it is possible to highlight the existence of a certain cultural variability in the way in which such emotions are understood, making it necessary to account for the context in which they are analyzed and interpreted. From there, Bedoya-Dorado and Molina-Valencia (2021), point out that:

The analysis of emotions from this perspective succeeded in positioning itself within the framework of the social sciences, and even today it is possible to identify publications and academic events in which the topic of emotions is discussed from its practical orientation and in relation to the contexts in which they are signified and resignified. (p.930)

Undoubtedly, when analysing the implications that emotions have had on certain questions or aspects of study, one must consider the context in which they occur. Also, another question not minor when studying emotions is the relevance that have both the body

where they transit and the experience prior to them. Extensively, these two variables could be said to form part of the context in which they are embedded, which in turn highlights that they are never presented in isolation. Even other aspects of human life that also relate to them could be observed and included.

Thus, linking emotions, language and speech with the body results in what Margaret Wetherell (2013) calls "affective practice", that is, the ways in which people use their emotions to give meaning to their experiences; and, at the same time to link up with other individuals. In this sense, Wetherell also highlights the importance of context in the evaluation of emotions and the role of emotions in social interaction mediated by communication. Failure to address these issues, according to the British author, would be indicative of a certain inability to deal with emotional states and emotions. In addition, it adds two other concepts that are key when analyzing the emotions and their impact, they are the concept of "encounter" and "affective atmosphere", with these terms refers to the relationship that is established between bodies and entities within the emotional environment, respectively, in which feelings and emotions interact on a given occasion.

On the other hand, situating ourselves in more current studies concerning the level of the emotions, we can recover what points out López Sánchez (2024), about the importance to give some centrality to the emotions and affects in the social theory, making the approach, in their case, from Latin America. Although the author stresses the importance of incorporating the affective question in studies of a historiographical, anthropological and sociological nature to understand certain phenomena, he points out that:

within the affective turn are other turns that challenged at the time the theoretical approaches stabilized and recognized by the scientific community to include emotions as a sensitive dimension of social phenomena and their problematization to build knowledge. There are the sociological studies of emotions -born in the 1970s- the anthropological and historiographical ones -in the 1980s- and the theories of affection (affective theory), which emerged in the 21st century. (López Sánchez, 2024, p.268)

With the latter, it supports the previously stated, about that in psychology, it was also necessary to value the role of emotions to analyze phenomena specific to the discipline. It is also pointed out in later lines that the *affective turn* allows us to focus not only on emotions but also on the body, which brings us back to the work of Spinoza, for whom body and mind are two aspects

of the same substance (Spinoza, 2000). In addition, due to the studies of William Reddy, it was possible to make a historical approach of emotions and to reveal their human and social functionality, putting them in dialogue with different disciplines, including cognitive psychology.

Finally, focusing on the question of linking individuals with society through emotions, we can point to the propositions of Damasio (1996), who through the Somatic Marker Hypothesis expresses that emotions guide the individual in decision-making. Since they collaborate in reducing options when choosing how to proceed, which in turn increases efficiency in deliberation. This hypothesis allows us to understand how emotions relate to reason and also focus attention on the body, thus questioning the Cartesian theory that created a gap between the body and the mind.

For Damasio the body is of great relevance, since according to his views emotions are bodily, that is, they are not reduced to mere mental experiences, but manifest themselves in the body through variations of physiological type as can be considered, increased heart rate, sweating, muscle tension, etc.

In this way, the body has an important role since it is constituted as the base where emotions are manifested and thanks to him we can account for them. Not everything remains in the mental plane for Damasio, then, but according to his proposals, there is interrelation between the mental plane and the somatic.

Now, as far as emotions are concerned, we must point out that in addition to being relevant when making decisions, they are also useful for exercising power and control over others, as well as for resisting and challenging power. This also implies that emotions play an important role in social interaction, since they allow people to communicate effectively and establish links between them (Ariza, 2020).

Thus, with respect to all the foregoing, it is evident that emotions operate as links between subjects and society, that is to say, they mediate in the interactions which take place and do not reduce everything to an action driven by reason. In this experience the body is not merely secondary, but on the contrary, it is what allows the emotions to be revealed.

Insanity from a gender perspective: redefining narrative

As we mentioned in Chapter 1, over time and the culture in which the concept is analyzed, we can find variations around the conceptualization of insanity. There is, however, a constant on the part of those who suffer from it, some stigma and negative speculation, and this happens mainly among women. In the

Renaissance, for example, madness was presented as a form of passion or love madness, recall the characterization that Ariosto makes of Orlando in *Orlando Enraged*:

my mind is in a lucid interval,
and I intend, as soon as I can,
To rest me coming out of the dance
but very quickly I will not be able to do it,
because evil has penetrated to the bone.
(Ariosto, 2019, p. 497)

Madness here is given out of love, but it is also synonymous with boldness, or at least so is presented in chant XXIV, where the final episode about the madness of Orlando is given, that is, where the narration of the same is completed. Whereas, if we think of the story established a few centuries earlier by Christianity, insanity in women is embodied by sin and witchcraft. It was considered at that time that women who lost their reason or manifested any sign of insanity were the result of demonic possession or mortal sin. This idea stems from the belief that women were beings of a weaker nature in terms of morality and spirit.

Thus, if we go back in time to the Middle Ages, to better understand how women were pathologized at that time, we can refer to the work of the German inquisitor Heinrich Kramer, who in his treatise *Malleus Maleficarum* or *The Hammer of the Witches*, presents a particular view of women and their relationship to witchcraft and insanity, which is illustrated in the following passage:

All witches come from the corruption of women, and as they are weaker in soul and body than men, they are more susceptible to the temptations of the devil... And so, women are more prone to witchcraft than men, because of their defective nature and tendency to evil. (Kramer, 2004, p. 41)

Kramer characterizes women here as beings marked by weakness and with a certain tendency to temptation. This text, which was a treaty against witchcraft, served as the basis for persecuting a large number of women accused of witchcraft during the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, who were identified as a threat to society itself, as well as to the Church. In this context, the Catholic Church held great power at a social level and influenced the way women were seen and among the characteristics that it attributed to them was a certain propensity to sin, becoming one of the most serious sorcery.

Witchcraft and insanity will then be linked together, on the basis of considering that women who were affected by mental problems or had unusual behaviors actually suffered from demonic possession or had fallen into such a state as a result of persistent sinful behavior.

This view built around the woman as a being prone to sin, it is possible to trace it not only in the literature of the time but in medicine itself. This is due to the fact of associating insanity with emotions, as we have mentioned throughout the sections of this chapter, and where it is assumed that following the emotions, which are associated with the feminine nature, is that certain erratic behaviors are derived which constitute insanity.

It should also be remembered that insanity was used as a tool of social control and that in women it was a way to keep them subsumed under male power and authority, whether by a father, husband, brother or any figure who claimed to be in charge of her.

Already in Modernity, precisely for the purposes of it, there is a marked interest in generating treatments to achieve a possible cure for such a condition, but the characteristic of this is that the patients were in large numbers, mainly women. For this reason, the studies focused mainly on insanity with characteristics specifically associated with women, laden mostly with prejudices and unfounded assumptions. However, there was something that stood out as an infallible data, and it is the fact that although studies in men and women are based on certain generalities, the particularities of each body had to be taken into account. Hence, as mentioned above, if we approach from cardiology a heart attack, we can note that the symptoms in men and women are different, with the issue of insanity happened the same, each case presented its particularities.

The madness, focused already from the woman as patient, in its type called hysteria, was the representation par excellence of the female madness. Although there were cases of hysteria in men, they were very few and in most of them corresponded to other pathologies misdiagnosed or confused by the similarity of their symptoms with this one. Thus, it was possible to separate hysteria from other diseases such as epilepsy, which in principle was studied together, a wide number of symptoms compatible with the disease were identified and possible treatments for its cure were tested. In spite of this, a problem remained, which refers to the fact that all studies and clinical trials were approached from a male perspective as well as patriarchal.

Later, in the twentieth century, there were significant changes in the way of understanding madness, given the critical revision of traditional models of understanding it and the incorporation of new perspectives into the subject, laid the groundwork for the emergence of a new approach to study. Now, with the emergence of the *affective turn* in the 1990s, there is a paradigm shift in various disciplines, including psychology and psychiatry, which allows new interpretations around madness to be established. This

paradigm shift facilitates an approach from a new perspective that looks at women as such, with their characteristics and particularities, throwing away any prejudice that has been used until now to support or back up previous theories.

It even begins to pay attention not only to the disease and its symptomatology as such, but also to the treatments used to find their possible cure and to the very institution in which they were housed. Recall that in terms of Foucault (1976), new knowledge and subjectivities are formed and configured. It should be noted, as mentioned earlier in *The section on the role of emotions in human experience*, that patients' condition worsened after being admitted to a psychiatric hospital rather than improving.

Previously, in the 1970s, psychologist and writer Phyllis Chesler, author of *Women and Madness*, focused her studies on the relationship between insanity and femininity within the framework of American society. He made a point of criticism against psychiatric medicine and the way in which over time it pathologized women, using sexist criteria to support both the diagnoses that he made and the consequent treatments applied.

According to Chesler, the oppression suffered in mental institutions led to an intensification and deepening of mental illnesses. It also adds that gender and culture will be counted as two conditioning variables when defining and treating insanity, which will directly replicate the dynamics in which patients are included (Chesler, 2005). This idea is represented in the 1999 film *Girl, Interrupted*, which explores the life of young Susanna Kaysen, who after being diagnosed with borderline personality disorder is admitted to a psychiatric institution for treatment. The context in which the film's plot is set is the 1960s, so Phyllis Chesler's criticism of the pathologization of women and the oppression that mental institutions exerted on them is reflected in the film. This shows how women are judged and (ill-) treated because of their gender, as well as due to social stereotypes, highlighting the importance of cultural and social context in the definition and treatment of insanity, an issue that aligns with Chesler's idea that gender and culture are determinant variables in the diagnosis and treatment of insanity.

Returning to Chesler's proposal, it should be pointed out that the deterioration of the patients within the institution was due to the lack of understanding which they themselves experienced, because as mentioned above, the cause of the disease was considered to be a certain emotional weakness which was understood as belonging to women, as if it were their nature. This, added to inappropriate treatments, in which it was not considered how they could replicate in the body and in

the psyche of the patients themselves, stood as almost tortuous treatments or therapies. The pain was always present, whether we talk about electroshock or immersion baths with cold water and ice, for example, we can note that it is used as a tool to restrain the alleged symptoms of the disease. Many years had to pass, so that it was understood that the pain did not cure but triggered other evils or deepened those already existing.

Another issue to consider is isolation, which is not a minor fact, since the social withdrawal and loss of communication with their families and friends, generate a deterioration in relationships and social skills of patients. Studies prove that contrary to what was previously believed, social support is essential for mental health well-being, and this applies not only to insanity but also to other mental illnesses. Therefore, it must be understood that the separation of patients in these circumstances is totally counterproductive and this is only brought to light by the change of perspective over time, but especially with the *affective turn*, when a critique and review is made of the practices that existed until now, leaving aside what was taken for granted and appealing to a claim of humanity as such from many women who were treated in an hostile and inappropriate way, just because they were so.

However, confining a patient and isolating her completely from the others, as was often the case, meant that in the face of a lack of stimuli and activity in general, she would be bored because she could not keep her mind on anything other than trying to get out. Thus, isolation not only failed to calm the patients, but also seemed to exacerbate their symptoms, plunging them into a cycle of negative feedback. Boredom, in general, deepened the episodes of sadness and also increased those that constituted states of euphoria. Furthermore, in this context, isolation could function as a tool that increases the power of the doctor in the institution, making it easier for him to impose his own influence through word and suggestion, which could significantly affect the patient's behavior and mental state.

The stigma that existed against this and other mental illnesses, has been diluted with the passage of time, thanks in part to the desmanicomialization and the change of focus in medical studies, that they have moved from focusing on institutionalization and isolation to prioritizing community care and social inclusion. The desmanicomialization arises with the work of Franco Basaglia in 1960. The Italian psychiatrist led an innovative experiment in the city of Trieste, Italy, to abolish mental hospitals and replace them with community-based care structures. Basaglia notes that:

We have started from the reality of the asylum, which is tragic because it is oppressive. It was not possible for hundreds of beings to live in inhumane conditions just because they were sick, and it was not possible for us as psychiatrists to become the architects and accomplices of such a situation. The mentally ill person is «sick» above all because he is an excluded, and is abandoned by everyone. Because he is a person without rights, against whom everything is possible. (Basaglia, 1970, p. 46)

This, in turn, has implied a reconsideration of the way in which it is proposed that mental ailments should be approached and has led to the emergence of new approaches that are primarily focused on the patient, rather than being closed only on the disease. Insanity has always brought with it for its patients notes of shame, loss of self-confidence and low self-esteem, so the new approaches in retrospect are positive.

Criticism of traditional psychiatry is a recurring theme in thinkers like Félix Guattari, who has questioned not only the psychiatric institution as such, but also psychiatrists and their modes of intervention. Guattari pointed to a more critical and liberating approach to mental health. In his work *Psychoanalysis and Transversality* (1976), Guattari questions the way in which psychoanalysis is institutionalized in society, claiming that it results in a form of control and normalization that can be harmful to individuals. He also points out that it can be used to establish a form of "normality", suppressing difference and singularity.

Guattari's criticism continues in *Lines of flight* (2013), where he no longer only questions the treatment given to mental illness within the framework of traditional psychiatry but also, as the title of the work points out, the idea of creating lines of escape, means ways of escaping the systems of control and oppression which are exercised over individuals.

Guattari notes that:

Psychiatry has conditioned its own impotence by trimming the symptoms and syndromes in such a way as to make them enter into closed frames about themselves -which gives to the facultative warned, it is true, the occasion of «giving lecture» their novice colleagues constantly pushing the school categories; in fact, they declare, it was never more than cases limits, *border lines*, also presenting a hysteria, traits of paranoia, not being incompatible a schizophrenic picture with depressive syndromes, etc. In a more general way, it can be considered that the «simple» and «logical» alternatives come almost

inevitably through forcing on reality.
(Guattari, 2013, pp.66-67)

With these words Guattari questions the way in which traditional psychiatry treats the complexity of psychiatric symptoms and syndromes, arguing that this constituted categories and closed tables that do not really reflect what patients experience, but they seek to impose control and order on patients' experiences without regard for any particularity. This is because by making these symptoms and syndromes fit into such closed frames, the reality is distorted and simplified, harming patients.

Gilles Deleuze joins the debate on the critique of traditional psychiatry in the *Anti-Edipo* (1985), a work written jointly with Guattari, in which he makes several points about the way in which traditional psychiatry approaches insanity and schizophrenia. The criticism at this point lies in the reduction of the complexities of human experience to a pre-established diagnosis. Thus, for these authors, psychiatry will account for a technification of the control and repression of desires and drives, instead of studying the potential that this could entail. From this stems the idea that traditional psychiatry has long been based on a narrow and reductionist view of human experience, leaving aside the value of psychic wealth.

The criticism of Deleuze and Guattari becomes more cruel by focusing on psychoanalysis and the way in which it approaches the individual-society relationship:

It is clear, therefore, that one pole of Oedipus is only abandoned to pass to the other. The question does not lie in getting out of it, neurosis or normality. The society of the brothers recovers nothing from the production and the machines wishing; on the contrary, it extends the veil of latency. As for those who do not let themselves be edified, in one form or another, the psychoanalyst is there to call in their help the asylum or the police. ¡The police with us! , never before has psychoanalysis shown its penchant for supporting the movement of social repression and participating in it with all its strength. (Deleuze & Guattari, 1985, pp. 86-87)

This quotation is relevant in the context of criticism of classical psychiatry, since it highlights how both authors see psychoanalysis as a tool for social control, that it is allied with existing power structures to maintain social order and repress any form of deviation that may arise.

These changes of vision around the insanity from the new knowledge provided by the movement of de-

manicomization and criticism of classical psychiatry, as well as, overcoming prejudices in reference to gender stereotypes, where men are seen as more rational and controlled beings, compared to women as more emotional and sensitive, demolishes the idea that associates emotions neatly with femininity. As well, the idea that emotions are symptoms of weakness and that they account for a certain internal imbalance, understanding in their place, that they constitute fundamental links to interact and generate ties with their environment and their fellows.

Madness will no longer be thought of as inherent in women, nor attributed to certain minorities considered weak or undesirable, but will be studied as a mental illness, beyond the gender in question. While there may be certain characteristics peculiar to men and women in the way in which certain symptoms may manifest themselves, human treatment will be equal for all and it will aim at carrying out not only research but also unprejudiced treatments on the subject. Madness will go from being a highly stigmatized disease to one more among many. This does not mean that it will be devalued, but the negative burden that has always been placed on it.

Conclusions and/or comments

To conclude, we can say that this work has aimed to deepen the understanding of *affective turn* and its relationship with madness, analyzing how emotions and subjectivity are built and experienced in different contexts. By reviewing the theoretical positions of various authors and reflecting on the relationship between *affective turn* and insanity, we have been able to better understand the complexity of this subject. However, it is important to recognize that this work does not exhaust the discussion on the question addressed and that there are limitations and possible variables which could be explored in future research. In this sense, it would be interesting to consider how affective policies can influence the construction of subjectivity and the experience of madness in different cultural and social contexts. Ultimately, this work is intended to contribute to the discussion of *affective turn* and its relationship with insanity, and it is hoped that it may be useful and serve as a starting point for further research and reflection on this subject.

The complexity of the relationship between *affective turn* and insanity requires an interdisciplinary and critical approach that takes into account the multiple variables that influence this relationship. This involves considering the emotional, social and cultural dimensions that shape the experience of insanity and its relationship to affective policies.

Therefore, we hope that this work can inspire future research and discussions on this topic, and that the understanding of the relationship between emotions, Subjectivity and insanity are fundamental to the development of policies and practices that promote people's mental health and well-being.

References

- Ahmed, S. (2004). *Deshacer el género*. Paidós.
- Ahmed, S. (2010). *The Promise of Happiness*. Duke University Press. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv125jkj2>
- Ahmed, S. (2012). *On Being Included: Racism and Diversity in Institutional Life*. Duke University Press.
- Ahmed, S. (2014). *Wilful Subjects*. Duke University Press. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv1131d51>
- Ahmed, S. (2015). *La política cultural de las emociones*. UNAM.
- Arfuch, L. (2002). *El espacio biográfico. Dilemas de la subjetividad contemporánea*. Buenos Aires: Fondo de Cultura Económica.
- Arfuch, L. (2016). El "giro afectivo". Emociones, subjetividad y política. *deSignis*, vol. 24, 245-254. <https://www.redalyc.org/pdf/6060/606066848013.pdf>
- Ariosto, L. (2019). *Orlando furioso*. Epublibre.
- Ariza, M. (2020). *Las emociones en la vida social: miradas sociológicas*. Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México
- Basaglia, F. (1970). *La institución negada. Informe de un hospital psiquiátrico*. Barral editores.
- Bedoya-Dorado, C., & Molina-Valencia, N. (2021). El estudio de las emociones desde el giro afectivo a las prácticas y atmósferas afectivas. *Revista Colombiana de Ciencias Sociales*, 12(2), 928-948. <https://doi.org/10.21501/22161201.3516>
- Bella, M.A. (2022). Superficies del dolor: Imágenes y afectos sobre la locura para politizar las violencias sobre nuestros cuerpos. *Polémicas Feministas*, 6, 1-17. <https://revistas.unc.edu.ar/index.php/polemicasfeminista/article/view/39413>
- Belli, S., & Íñiguez-Rueda, L. (2008). El estudio psicosocial de las emociones: una revisión y discusión de la investigación actual. *Psico*, 39(2), 139-151.
- Berlant, L. (2000). *Intimacy*. University of Chicago Press Journals.
- Berlant, L. (2008a). Thinking about feeling historical. *Emotion, Space and Society, Volume 1, Issue 1(1)*, 4-9. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.emospa.2008.08.006>
- Berlant, L. (2008b). *The Female Complaint: The Unfinished Business of Sentimentality in American Culture*. Duke University Press <https://doi.org/10.1215/9780822389163>
- Berlant, L. (2011). *Cruel Optimism*. Duke University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1215/9780822394716>
- Bird, A. (2012). La filosofía de la historia de la ciencia de Thomas Kuhn. *Discusiones Filosóficas*. 13 (21), 167-185. <http://www.scielo.org.co/pdf/difil/v13n21/v13n21a10.pdf>
- Butler, J. (1990). *El género en disputa: El feminismo y la subversión de la identidad*. Rautledge.
- Butler, J. (2004). *Vida precaria: El poder del duelo y la violencia*. Paidós.
- Butler, J. (2010). *Cuerpos que importan*. Paidós.
- Chesler, P. (2005). *Women and madness*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Damasio, A. (1996). *El error de Descartes. La razón de las emociones*. Editorial Andrés Bello.
- Daros, W. (2007). Los condicionamientos sociales en los paradigmas científicos: Popper y Kuhn. *Invenio*, 10 (18), 47-74. <https://www.redalyc.org/articulo.oa?id=87701805>
- De Beauvoir, S. (2018). *El Segundo sexo*. Lumen.
- Deleuze, G. y Guattari, F. (1985). *El Anti Edipo. Capitalismo y esquizofrenia*. Paidós.
- Didi-Huberman, G. (2022). *La invención de la histeria. Charcot y la iconografía fotográfica de la Salpêtrière*. Ediciones Cátedra; Calambur.
- Edwards, D. (1999). Emotion Discourse. *Culture & Psychology*, 5(3), 271-291. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1354067X9953001>
- Foucault, M. (1976). *Vigilar y castigar, Nacimiento de la prisión*. Siglo XXI.
- Guattari, F. (2013). *Líneas de fuga. Por otro mundo de posibles*. Cactus.
- Ibáñez, T. (1992). ¿Cómo se puede no ser constructorista hoy en día? *Revista de Psicoterapia*. 3 (12), 245-257.
- Kosofsky Sedgwick, E. (2003). *Touching feeling: Affect, pedagogy, performativity*. Duke

- University Press.
<https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv11smq37>
- Kuhn, T. (1962). *The structure of scientific revolutions*. University of Chicago Press.
- Kramer, H. (2004[1486]). *Malleus maleficarum*. Editorial Maxtor.
- Laguna, H. G., Cocho, G. y Miramonetes, P. (2016). La revolución filosófica de Kuhn. *Discusiones Filosóficas*. 17(28), 47 – 66. <https://doi.org/10.17151/difil.2016.17.28.4>
- Lerner, G. (1986). *La creación del patriarcado*. Oxford University Press.
- Maíz, C. (2020). El “giro afectivo” en las humanidades y ciencias sociales. Una discusión desde una perspectiva latinoamericana. *Cuadernos de CILHA*, 33, 11-14.
- Massumi, B. (1995). The autonomy of affect. *Cultural Critique*, 31, 83-109. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1354446>
- Pateman, C. (1995). *El contrato sexual*. Anthropos.
- Popper, K. (1980). *La lógica de la investigación científica*. Tecnos.
- Reddy, W. (2001). *The Navigation of Feeling. A Framework for the History of Emotion*. Cambridge University Press.
- Rizo García, M. (2004). Reseña de “El espacio biográfico. Dilemas de la subjetividad contemporánea” de Leonor Arfuch. *Revista Mexicana de Ciencias Políticas y Sociales*, 46 (190), 232-238. <https://www.redalyc.org/pdf/421/42119014.pdf>
- Sandoval, C. (1991). U.S. Third World Feminism: The Theory and Method of Oppositional Consciousness in the Postmodern World. *Genders*, 10, 1-24. Recuperado de: <https://www.dialogoglobal.com/barcelona/texts/sandoval/Sandoval%20US%20Third%20World%20Feminism.pdf>
- Spinoza, B. (2000). *Ética demostrada según el orden geométrico*. Editorial Trotta.
- Wetherell, M. (2013). Affect and Discourse – What’s the Problem? From Affect as Excess to Affective/discursive Practice. *Subjectivity*, 6(4), 349-368. <https://doi.org/10.1057/sub.2013.13>