

## ***Editorial***

# **The "affective turn" in the humanities and social sciences. A discussion from a Latin American perspective.**

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Theoretical preoccupation with emotions dates from the mid-1990s especially in the area of Anglo-Saxon studies. The affective turn is based on epistemological proposals such as theories on subjectivity, theories of the body, feminist theory, Lacanian psychoanalysis linked to the studies of political theory. All of this has resulted in a resurgence of an economy of emotions. The names in dance to give us a genealogical idea of the theoretical aspects go from Baruch Spinoza to Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari. The movement challenged the conventional oppositions between emotion and reason, speech and affect, highlighting the complex relationship between power, subjectivity and emotion of political theorizing, one of the pioneering works was that of Sara Ahmed, *Cultural politics of emotions* (2004). As can be seen, we are facing interdisciplinary, transdisciplinary and extended-scope theoretical positions.

The "affective turn" in the social sciences and humanities originates from various epistemological dissatisfactions. Among those that we could name

come from gender studies, the excessive scientific view of the body and the neglect that it is also a cultural construct, since the body cannot be identified with the individual. The body, in such a way, is displaced towards other fields of specialization. The emotions of the body and culturally differentiated were rejected by the social sciences, being relegated to psychology or medicine. A rigorous question then arises: which entity accesses social ties, the body or the individual? For these variations to take place, the subject ceased to have a peripheral place in social studies. Furthermore, the "affective turn" was imposed to revise modern dualisms: body and mind, reason and passion, nature and culture. The persistence of these dualisms should be sought, on the one hand, in the rise of individualism that characterizes our time and, on the other, in a return to positivism and rationalism.

A first and main premise is that emotions are marked by links, since they are not absolute states. Emotions are the manifestation of the affective resonance of the event, they express the other through a reaction. In this sense, it can be understood as a communication code that varies according to cultures. They are particular signals but they are socially codified, in this way the external factors provoke different attitudes in the individual (mourning, birth, crime, etc.). Emotions then are not abstract or physiological substances, but rather they express the conditions social of the subject.

The tension between the natural and the cultural can be seen in the statement that emotions are physiological reactions to certain stimuli (from the outside in), therefore they are of an individual order. Here the cultural dimension is irrelevant since everything is confined to the individual who reacts in a similar way regardless of time and societies. The naturalistic vision limits the symbolic dimension of emotions. The other tension, reason-emotion, would be governed by a different mechanism. As David Le Breton says: "The opposition between 'reason' and 'passion', between a kind of zero affectivity conducive to intelligence and emotion, on the other hand, causing moral loss or loss of lucidity, is a thread red in the western history of philosophy, but this opposition



is ignored in other cultures”<sup>1</sup>. The passions have been perceived as defects of the soul and origin of diseases and losses<sup>2</sup>. Emotion would represent, according to a generalized vision, the absence of reason and reactions that dominate the individual (from the inside out). This dualism is not far from the other dichotomy between mind and body. However, it is not proven that cognitive processes dispense with emotions or affects.

In what way to connect, to conclude, the turn "affective turn" from a Latin American tradition. One of the recent studies on the topic *The Language of Emotions* by Mabel Moraña and Ignacio Sánchez Prado proposes “not to reduce the issue of affects to an identifiable paradigm”, but to display “the enormous potential that critical languages of affect, emotion and sentimentality they have for a possible reinterpretation of canonical productions of Latin American culture”<sup>3</sup>.

Therefore, our magazine tries to contribute to the debate of this "affective turn" in the literary studies of Latin America through the dossier that has been coordinated by Amor Hernández Peñaloza and Orfa Kelita Vanegas Vásquez.

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<sup>1</sup> Le Breton, D. (1999). *Las pasiones ordinarias. Antropología de las emociones*. Nueva Visión, p. 106.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 107.

<sup>3</sup> M. Moraña e I. Sánchez Prado (eds.) (2012). *El lenguaje de las emociones. Afecto y cultura en América Latina*. Iberoamericana, Vervuert, p. 13.