

SUZUKI, Wendy 2021, *Good Anxiety: Harnessing the Power of the Most Misunderstood Emotion*, New York: Atria Books. ISBN 978-1982170738, 304 pages

When we talk about the human person, we must also talk about affectivity, a component that is also essentially fundamental for her to be able to self-realize, where tendencies, emotions, feelings, sensations, passions, and states of mind stand out above all. However, when we approach affectivity, we generally tend to make some mistakes, from a scientific point of view. I highlight the most frequent ones: a) affectivity is always opposed to reason, typical of dualism; b) the human person is nothing more than his affectivity, typical of monism.

There are several affections. An example of affect is anxiety. However, when addressing this affect, we also tend to make some mistakes from a scientific point of view, such as: a) anxiety is always considered as an irrational affect; b) anxiety is identified as an evil, from which we must always get rid of, thus not seeing its positive aspect in many situations; c) it is argued that it is always possible to eliminate all anxiety, or rather that it is possible to live without anxiety; d) anxiety is confused with other affects, which are essentially distinct. Considering these points, *Good Anxiety: Harnessing the Power of the Most Misunderstood Emotion*, authored by neuroscientist and psychologist Wendy Suzuki, is quite interesting, because, by establishing an interdisciplinary dialogue, especially between these two areas of knowledge, seeks to demystify some of the mistakes that are made when addressing anxiety, thus proposing a more realistic view regarding this affection. To this end, the author divides her work into three parts, titled respectively: 1) “The Science of Anxiety”; 2) “Learning How to Worry Well: Anxiety’s Hidden Superpower”; and 3) “The Art of Worrying Well: “Tools to Calm, Flip, and Channel your Anxiety”.

The first part contains three chapters. In the first, entitled “What is Anxiety?”, Suzuki seeks to analyze and describe anxiety, demonstrating the positive and negative side of this affect. At the same time, here, she also distinguishes and relates anxiety with other affects with which it generally tends to be confused. Finally, she also demonstrates the function and purpose of good anxiety. In the second chapter, entitled “Leveraging the Power of the Brain’s Plasticity”, Suzuki relates the brain to anxiety, showing the influence of good and bad anxiety on the brain and vice versa. She also relates anxiety to intellect, temperament, and genetics. In the third chapter, entitled “Coping with

Anxiety in Real Life”, Suzuki shows how we should react to anxiety, in order to be able to integrate it. She also shows how the poor integration of anxiety, however, creates problems for us in several ways. Finally, in this chapter, the author also establishes a relationship between anxiety and will.

The second part of the work contains six chapters. Thus, in the fourth chapter, entitled “Supercharge Your Resilience”, Suzuki, as the title suggests, establishes a relationship between anxiety and resilience. In the fifth, entitled “Enhance Your Performance and Open the Door to Flow”, Suzuki shows how anxiety can improve or damage our performance. Subsequently, in the sixth chapter, entitled “Nurture an Activist Mindset”, Suzuki not only continues to establish a relationship between intellect and anxiety but also extends this relationship to other dimensions such as the environment, society, interpersonal relationships, etc. She also highlights the importance of being aware of our affections, of being realistic, and of knowing how to integrate them. In the seventh, entitled “Amplify Your Focus and Productivity”, the author not only shows the importance of focus/attention and meditation in our lives but also relates them to anxiety and vice versa. She also warns of the problem of *multitasking*. In the eighth chapter, entitled “Prime Your Social Brain, Quell Your Social Anxiety, and Heighten Your Compassion”, Suzuki shows the importance of other people (in particular, parents and educators) in our brain and cognitive development and in our affective education. She also highlights the importance of helping others in this process, above all, through empathy and compassion. In the ninth chapter, entitled “Boost Your Creativity”, the author establishes a relationship between creativity and anxiety.

Finally, the third part contains only one chapter, the last chapter of the work, entitled “The Art of Worrying Well”, in which Suzuki shows several ways of how we should relate to our anxiety.

Of the various positive points found in the work, I would like to highlight the following. Methodologically speaking, the first is the fact that Suzuki proposes and creates an interdisciplinary approach, in particular between philosophy, psychology, psychiatry, neuroscience, sociology, education, and biology, in order to achieve the objective, she aimed to achieve. Along these lines, I consider it equally important that Suzuki, through very simple and explicit but at the same time profound language, explains some neuroscientific notions that may not be known to many readers. By doing this, I think she gives more consistency to her work. Methodologically speaking, another important point of the work is the fact that Suzuki uses her testimony as well as the testimony of other people, in order to give credibility and corroborate her ideas. In this way, it is also worth highlighting the fact that she uses some graphs in order to substantiate her observations too.

Regarding the objective of the work, a fundamental point that stands out in the work is the fact that Suzuki shows how affectivity is an equally important component so that we can self-realize in a better way. Thus, presenting a very realistic vision, she basically counters two reductionisms that frequently occur when analyzing this component: 1) monism, as seen in psychologism or sentimentalism (criticizing, in this way, the fact that many times we tend to identify with our affections); 2) and dualism, which considers affectivity as an essentially irrational component and which, therefore, is always opposed to reason and the good of the human person (criticizing, in this sense, the repression of affections).

Talking about affectivity, despite not having initially identified and distinguished the different types of affects that the human person can experience and how they relate to each other (in fact, anxiety can not only be an emotion but can also be a feeling, a state of mind, at the same time that it can come from a certain temperament or can become a character trait), I consider it equally interesting, concerning the objective of the work, that Suzuki highlights and analyze anxiety, an affect that is often misunderstood, as she remarks, thus showing that there are basically two types of anxiety: positive and negative.

It is also noteworthy that the author distinguishes anxiety from other affects with which they are often confused, thus showing how they can be related. However, I do not agree with the distinction she made between “positive emotions” and “negative emotions”. In fact, what distinguishes a positive emotion from a negative emotion is not the fact that they are pleasant or unpleasant, but rather whether they fit proportionally to the object that motivated them.

It stands out as a positive point that Suzuki considers anxiety as well as an intentional experience, where the subject establishes a significant, conscious, and intellectual relationship with an object of importance to him. However, as the author also points out, it can also be an unintentional experience, as happens, for example, in anxiety disorders.

Another important point of the work is the fact that Suzuki has identified not only an objective component but also a subjective component concerning anxiety. In fact, for example, regarding the subjective component, the object that motivates our anxiety varies from person to person. How anxiety is experienced also varies from person to person from a quantitative and qualitative point of view.

It is also remarkable that the author analyzes and establishes a relationship between anxiety and the intellect, the will, and the body. In this sense, more specifically concerning the intellect, the ‘symbiotic’ relationship that Suzuki establishes between anxiety and some cognitive acts is important, in particular

regarding judgment and meditation. Regarding the will, the relationship that she establishes between anxiety and attention, concentration, resilience, and creativity stands out too. More specifically, concerning the body, the relationship Suzuki establishes between anxiety and good nutrition, physical exercise, and relaxation stands out too. Furthermore, concerning the body, the work is also notable for the fact that the author relates the brain and our nervous system to anxiety, using a neuroscientific approach to this end.

It also stands out in the work that Suzuki shows how genetics, temperament, the environment, society, groups, the people we live with, etc. interfere with anxiety and how they influence our affective education.

The integration and education of our affectivity, in particular anxiety, plays an important role for Suzuki; something that must be done from childhood, using love to do so. In this sense, it is important that she also shows how poor anxiety education can blind us, thus negatively conditioning the quality of our cognitive and volitional acts, our psychosomatic health, the quality of our relationships, etc., and, in this way, our self-realization.

We tend to disregard, discredit, or overestimate affectivity, thus falling into some reductionism. Likewise, we tend to misunderstand some affects, such as anxiety, ending up not only confusing it with other affects but also considering it as a harmful affect, which therefore appears as something that must be eliminated. In this sense, I would like to recommend reading *Good Anxiety*, which, by establishing an interdisciplinary dialogue, as mentioned, seeks to demystify some myths regarding anxiety, thus proposing a more realistic view regarding this affection, something that can allow us to self-fulfill in a better way. In this way, I finish, motivating, if I may, the Wendy Suzuki to continue with her good work.

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