

Towards a Comprehensive Theory of Affectivity III. On the Affective Attachment and Affects. Tentative Conclusions about a Theory of Affectivity based on Attachment Formation

Ricardo Morgado Giraldo

Associate Professor, retired, Department of Research Methods and Diagnosis in Education University of Seville, Spain

ABSTRACT

This article is the third in a series, in which we wanted to compile our views on Affectivity, while exposing, for the first time, the perspectives that have emerged in recent times.

The most noteworthy novelties, which we now provide, refer to a description of each of the states, or phases, through which both the positive and the negative attachment pass. In addition, we have dedicated a space to try to explain why, in certain moments or situations, the cycle, which provokes the attachment, destabilizes and disappears, or changes direction, from positive to negative.

We have also devoted some space to explain how our research methodologies have been combined.

Finally, we have stopped to discern on the present and future methods of knowledge transfer, more pertinent to the subject that concerns us; finding ourselves with the need of effective ways to explain and to discuss with professionals of the health and educational areas, the questions that are considered pertinent around intervention and/or therapeutic programs.

*Corresponding author

Ricardo Morgado Giraldo, Associate Professor, retired, Department of Research Methods and Diagnosis in Education University of Seville, Spain.

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Feeling and Thinking

The second meaning of the term "feeling" has more to do with thinking. Here feeling has to do with the conceptualization that, while emotional states may exist independently of cognition, our awareness of them is a very important factor in emotional life. Such awareness is its self-cognition, a cognition about a feeling state or about the experience of certain behaviour. Analogous to knowing about knowing, it is knowing, about feeling, a counterpart to meta-cognition. Thus, it might be the case that I am in a state of happiness yet I do not feel happy: that is to say, I do not have awareness of my happiness. Although it is presumed that there is a self-awareness of happiness most of the time, there are many emotional states occurring at many different times of which we are not aware. Three classes of such happenings follow as examples of potentially different processes at work in associating or disassociating the thinking or attending aspect of feeling from the state aspect of feeling [1].

Preamble

In our recent works on affectivity, we have been focusing on the affective attachment, which we have come to consider as the driving force of affectivity. Also, in these works we have insisted on our idea about the duality of knowledge (in two modes of information processing, which complement each other): a) cognitive mode and b) affective mode. But before continuing with this, let us return, for a moment, to the approach we initially

took in the 1980s (as a result of our interactionist approach) of considering that the cognitive and the emotional generated feelings about EGO and feelings about the social group. But our current approach on two ways of processing information, by our mind-brain, leads us to the following considerations, which make us introduce some modification:

- Possibly, what, in most of the scientific literature, is known as emotions, is actually only a part of the broader set of affects or feelings, so that emotions contribute a sensory component -we could say "intensifying the signal" to highlight what is relevant from what is not (the figure in the background)- to the affective way of processing information, thus contributing to the "involvement in the task" of knowing.
- We are not seeing now the feelings as a hybrid of cognition and emotion, but as the most prominent affects of each family or group of affects.
- We are defining the groups of affects by the role of the EGO before the object. The description and delimitation of these groups of affects is what we will do next.

Introduction

After our last two papers, in which we highlighted the need for a comprehensive theory of affectivity. We said comprehensive, meaning that we considered them as a whole. and we do not limit ourselves to act with the "emotional competences", according to the ideas of the followers of the so-called Emotional Intelligence School, or the Hispanic School of Emotional Education, ideas referred, above all, to these so-called "emotional competences". We must take into account that this expression of "emotional

competence” alludes to the ability to “compete”, to “succeed”.... Our scientific purposes have a different objective than that of competing, they seek rather to understand a reality, previously delimited and delimited, using tools whose reliability and validity have been proven in some way, and which have been used on the basis of previous or ex-post-fact objectives, as the case may be.

For these reasons, in our work, we decided, from the beginning, to achieve a better understanding of what we call affectivity, starting both from the empirical method and from theoretical reflection, taking into account the studies of contemporaries or predecessors, which would help us in this task we undertook.

At present, as a colophon to the two previous articles (2024 and 2025), we propose three tasks, in order to conclude (at least provisionally) one of the parts of the theory of affectivity: that which refers to the role of the attachment in affectivity.

First, we will go on to describe the different states of the affective attachment, aided by Field Theory.

Secondly, we will see what happens when the pair of forces that originate this circular movement becomes unbalanced and predominates, either the centripetal force (the cycle slows down, because the EGO turns towards itself, and ignores the environment) or the centrifugal force (the circle breaks up, for the opposite reason).

We propose, thirdly, to start an empirical test, on how the cycle behaves (according to the Spanish speakers).

Something more about the Different States of the attachment

From now on, we will call the affective cycle in a more understandable way, we will call it: States of the attachment (there would be a cycle proper of the positive attachment and another proper of the negative attachment).

What are the possible problems, which can be with respect to the states of the attachment?

- The cycle is not complete, or one of its states is so weak that it is almost non-existent.
- The cycle has a tendency to slow down to an almost complete stop.
- As a possibility: the states of the link alter their order among themselves.

In addition

We ask ourselves, is there an ideal duration or speed for each cycle?
What can we do?

For the moment, something that is still pending: describe how and why the link passes from one state to another and, therefore, why doesn't it sometimes pass? Is it possible for it to regress? Approximately, everything happens to it that can happen to something that is subject to a circular motion (which has its momentum and force).

Let's see what can happen in each transit. However, previously, we must stop to describe each of the states that intervene in the affective cycle:

The description of the passage from one state to the other is of interest, as an aid to define the procedures of repair or incentive of the cycle and of its functions to regulate the behaviour.

Clarification and Description of the Groups of Affects, which we have Called thus: “States of Mind” or “States of the attachment”

So that they have a better understanding, those that approach this theory to know it, we have made this description, of these stages or states; helping us, in this occasion of the Field Theory".

The positive link

- **Admiration:** Putting in value. Highlighting the figure over the background. In a given context (perceptual field), to perceive an element that stands out above the others (either because we are looking for something of those characteristics, or because its novelty suggests a superior value or contributions of something that we did not have).

The passage from Admiration to attachment or attachment, will need: minimum duration (which will vary according to the cases), to be relevant to the interests of the individual, to be among its priorities.

- **attachment:** Maintenance of the initial interest, with a tendency to maintain it for a time reasonably superior to any other element of the environment to be considered. It happens when this attachment responds to expectations, it does not depend on the individual, if expectations fail, so does the attachment and this will lead to obsession or resilience, depending on the reasonableness of perseverance.

- **Pleasure:** The person has a claim to maintain the link and places it at a higher level in his or her preferences.... If there is no automatic transition from one state to the other, there will be dysfunctions that will require a precise diagnosis in order to correct them.

- **Joy/sadness:** Joy follows pleasure when there is an expectation of maintaining the attachment. Otherwise, sadness disappears or even sadness appears.

The passage from Joy to Security favours entrepreneurship, i.e. the search for new objects (objectives) and leads to the establishment of new links. With the energy that joy brings, identity, motivation and the desire to expand the environment or perceptual field are affirmed.

- **Security/Insecurity:** The individual achieve it, when the loss of the attachment is not see as probable. Overconfidence works against the attachment, as it tends to overvalue the subject (the individual or EGO, itself) and to lose interest and the attachment with the object.

The transition from Security to Pride requires social recognition, as the latter can only come about through comparison with other individuals.

- **Pride/Shame:** There comes a moment when the maximum possibilities for the development of the attachment are reached. Only maintenance or replacement by another object is possible in this case.

Likewise, with respect to the negative attachment.

- **Aversion/Disdain:** It points to an object, highlighting it in the subject's environment, as a signal, eliciting avoidance or aggression to the object. It sometimes turns the figure into background, making the object lose relevance, or even trying to remove it from the perceptual field: by narrowing the field or by pushing the object out of the field.

Aversion is the trigger or signal for this to start the cycle.

- **Rejection:** As mentioned above, it consists of:
 - I. Displacement of the object to the background, or
 - II. Narrowing the field to leave the object outside, or
 - III. Pushing the object out of the field

Displeasure

If the rejection with the three mechanisms mentioned with its objective, Displeasure is produced whose consequence is the disinterest for what is in the perceptual field, until EGO finds a configuration of the field that is not rejectable; including the objects that are in it.

The passage from pleasure to Sadness happens at some point when EGO reaches the conclusion that it cannot make the object disappear from its perceptual field.

Sadness

A barrier then emerges within the perceptual field that neutralizes the unwanted object.

This “encystation” of the aversive object produces Insecurity in EGO, either because it is perceived as a direct threat, or because it is a repeated source of Displeasure.

Insecurity

The presence of a threat in its perceptual field opens the EGO's doubt about its capacity to overcome the challenge. EGO's reaction is to consider itself unworthy (Shame) or to be ashamed of the field and leave that field.

Shame

It is a self-recognition of insolvency, which leads to:
 - Self-annulment of EGO in the field in question
 - Abandonment of the field or
 - Search for another object within it.
 It has to do with guilt and with the search for exoneration.

Reading this last section, one can see the influence of Spinoza's Geometry of the Passions (Spinoza, 1980), but we do not understand that influence as a need for symmetry. We understand this relationship with geometry in another way, and this is that in these cases, the cognitive mode processes the information looking for parallelisms versus convergences and divergences, (creating classes) while in the affective mode, it tries to establish symmetry and dissymmetries (assigning cases to each corresponding class).

What are the Affects that we Group into each Type of Affect.

As a reminder and for a better understanding of the reader, since we are now following this classification, we recall that in our work of 2015c, we established that:

Negative effects could be classified into:

Type I: Disappointment (Aversion). And then we considered that they referred to	à [expectations of the other -] [1].
Type III: Unhappiness/ sadness/ hopelessness/ disillusionment/ boredom/ ennui/ loneliness	à [disabling moods] [3]
Type V: Anger/ hatred/anger/ anger	à [segregating affects] [5]
Type VII: Guilt/shame/shame/ shame/regret	ego-position-] [7] ego-position-] [7]
Type IX: Powerlessness/ fear/ Stress/ Anxiety/ Jealousy/ Insecurity	à [solidity of self-] [9]
Type XI: Pleasure/forced sexuality	à [viscerality-sensuality-] [11]

Illustration 1.Types of "negatives" attachment."

Moreover, the positives in:

Type II: Admiration	à [expectation of the other +] [2]
Type IV: Joy/ happiness/ hope/ illusion/ motivation/ tranquility/ serenity	à [coadjuvant moods] [4]
Type VI: Love/family/ empathy/sympathy/friendship/ companionship	à [binding affects] [6]
Type VIII: Pride	à [ego position +] [8]
Type X: Security/confidence	à [solidity of self +] [10]
Type XII: Pleasure/sexuality	à[viscerality-sensuality +] [12]

Illustration 2.Types of "positives" attachment.

And the circularity of the model we proposed in 2023 and 2024.

New evidence would be useful to validate this classification, and we are preparing a paper on it.

Possible Reasons why the attachment may Go from Positive to Negative

In principle, it would seem that the phase of the positive attachment, in which it fails, will lead to its parallel in the negative cycle; but the apparent phenomenology tells us that they may (following the cyclical simile) skip a phase, when the “angular velocity” increases, for some reason.

Admiration → No → Contempt

↓ Yes
 ↓ attachment → No → Reject Rejection Failure in attachment can provoke the opposite reaction (Rejection) and a feeling of discomfort (Displeasure), but never Sadness, because this signals “loss”, and you cannot lose what you do not have.

↓ Yes
 ↓ Plaisure → No → Displaisure In this case, sadness can occur, because the initial pleasure indicates that there has been some form of “attachment”.

↓ Yes
 ↓ Joy → No → Sadness If the positive link does not produce Joy, it generates Insecurity, because it casts doubt on its authenticity.

↓ Yes
 ↓ Security → No → Insecurity Even if the attachment is maintained, if EGO does not consider itself “deserving” of what it has, it may think that it will easily lose it, which will generate shyness and a paradoxical shame, close to guilt.

↓ Yes
 ↓ Pride → No → Shame

Illustration 3. The Unstable Balance of the Affective System.

In the above graph, the expressions Yes and No refer to whether the link remains stable and positive in nature.

Naturally, all these observations should be verified, both with research designs and in clinical and teaching settings. If these hypotheses were confirmed, we would then have not only an explanatory but also a predictive model, which would facilitate the prophylaxis of various dysfunctions in the affective mode.

The Methodology Used for this Theory Outline

The methodology has been very diverse, which could lead some people to think that this is detrimental to the results obtained. But although we have resorted to Interactionism (emotion/cognition), Systems Theory, Phenomenology, Gestalt and Field Theory, we have been able to overcome, we believe with success, this difficulty thanks to the holistic approach of humanistic psychology. This psychology not only considers people as a whole, not as a sum of parts, but also considers science as a whole and the findings obtained with different methodologies, we can also consider compatible with each other, if we have perseverance and persist, and we achieve the compatibility of different methodologies. However, in order to facilitate the reader a better understanding of this combination, we will now focus on two of these methodologies.

On the one hand, we make the readers see that we contemplate the attachment as a situation in which each individual (EGO) marks an object or objects in his own perceptual field over the others or among the others, in a more or less lasting or stable way. This being equivalent to one or several objects of the perceptual field, acquiring a negative or positive valence, but always standing out from the background as recommended by the Gestalt theorists [2].

In our previous work, we have completed the vision exposed before, using the findings of the Field Theory, in order to explain what happens when the background shrinks or widens, is distorted or curved, or the objects we distinguish are several and interact with each other [3]. We have even considered in this proposal, in order to define some of the states or phases of the link, that sometimes, when the figures on the background reverse their role, and that even the forces (for example: social pressure, in the form of approval or censure) acting on the field, may not vary their magnitude, but their sense.

Some of these background distortions can be described as follows:
- When ALTER potentiates or deafens the signal of potential objects or of the background itself (manipulation of information, with the multiple strategies that exist to manipulate it, whether in the individual or social field).

- When the receptivity of EGO is either very high or very low (we can say that the perceptual threshold is wider or narrower than normative).

However, for our approach we have not considered Bowlby's attachment theory, not because it seems to us to be inappropriate, but because the linguistic code I use could lead to confusion, as it overlaps with other very different ones that we have used [4]. Although one of his disciples we did take him into account, years ago, at the beginning of our work on affectivity [5].

Knowledge Transmission Strategies

The conclusions and possible findings will be of little use if we do not transmit them to the rest of the scientific community, which will mean, in the first place, having to make an effort to make the theory more understandable, so that mainly health and education professionals, who need a clear understanding of affectivity, can use it.

At some point, in addition, we intend to take advantage of the resource of collaborative professional social networks, to give a wider scope to this task [6-10].

So far, emotion specialists have struggled to find ways to train people to have the knowledge and skills necessary for good "emotional intelligence", on the assumption that these are often lacking. This needs assessment seems correct in principle, but in our opinion, it does not take into account that, rather than training EGO to use its emotions, it is those emotions and affects that constitute one's individuality, in interaction with rationality (cognitive mode) [11-17].

Our concerns, on the other hand, are more in getting an explanatory discourse of our theory, clear and precise enough to design intervention methodologies, both programmatic and therapeutic, mainly in the educational and health fields, but also in fields such as social management or epistemology. This is where we stand.

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