

# Emotion as Communication / Narratives

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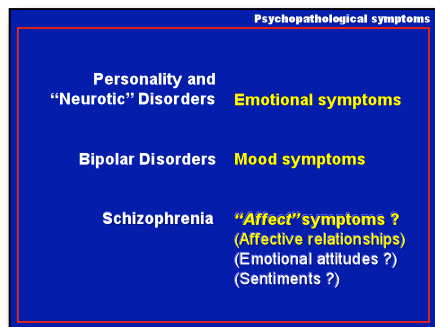
The first thing that happens when we speak about emotions is that we don't know what we are speaking about. The first confusion is the distinction between emotion, affect, mood, passion, feeling, sentiment, drive and other similar phenomena. Some of these terms reflect different approaches to the same problem, according to the psychological school from which we start. As my life is listening to patients, my point of departure is classical and descriptive psychopathology. This is an atheoretical school, whose rationality is to find, describe and analyse some damaged part in order to know how the whole machine works.

In 1994, Paul Ekman and Richard Davidson published a book - *The nature of emotions* - in which the most outstanding researchers in the field discussed several topics on emotions. The second chapter of the book is related to the distinction between affective constructs. Besides Davidson and Ekman, there were answers from Nico Frijda, Goldsmith, Jerome Kagan, Lazarus, Panksepp, David Watson and Ana Clark. All the contributors made a distinction between *emotion* and *mood*, but they disagree on the criteria for this distinction. Emotions and moods interact in several ways, but mood may be more longlasting, less differentiated, and nonintentional (without object), and it forms the background for every emotion. However, every emotion tends to prolong itself into a mood. Another interesting hypothesis postulated by Frijda and Davidson is that while mood can bias cognition, emotion can affect actions.

This distinction agrees with psychopathological tradition, in which mood symptoms are primary symptoms in bipolar disorders, while emotional symptoms belong to neurotic and personality disorders. However, Continental European psychopathologists have found another different construct. | It is affect, whose pathology is seen in schizophrenics. The main differentiating feature of this new set of symptoms is that, instead of belonging to an individual person, they are concerned with the relationship between people. In fact, schizophrenic patients become indifferent, rigid, blunted or ambivalent in relation to other people, giving the impression of a soulless robot.

For instance, a schizophrenic described by Bleuler said: *"I went to the funeral and was happy, however, that it wasn't I who was being buried"*. The patient was happy and could express and change his emotions. The problem is that he was speaking about his father's death.

These affective relationships, whose absence, in schizophrenic patients, transforms a person into a robot-like organism, may be an outstanding feature of human nature. They can be expressed (and perceived) through emotional expressions, but they are more than this. As seems to occur in superior mammals, they can be an innate basic language, which causes members of a group to approach or withdraw, enables organization and transmits information. However, in humans, affective relationships are much more complex. Firstly, they imply an immediate recognition and appraisal of other people, as we now know from the discovery of a great cortical area devoted to the



recognition of faces. Secondly, they include something like compassion, or empathy, the possibility of perceiving the other as oneself.

This kind of *compassion*, which we can also call *empathy* or "having the other inside me", has been a central theme in continental phenomenological philosophy. For Jaspers, and the humanists, it is the core of psychopathological methodology. Poets, such as Camões, and psychotherapists, such as Moreno, have also talked about it.

The "other inside me"- Camões	The "other inside me"- Moreno
<p>Transforma-se o amador na coisa amada Por virtude do muito imaginar Não tenho logo mais que desejar Pois em mim tenho a parte desejada ... Se nele está minha alma transformada Que mais deseja o corpo de alcançar? <i>Luis de Camões</i></p> <p>The lover becomes the beloved By much imagining Thus, I don't have to wish Because in me I have the part that I desire ... If my soul is in him transformed What more does the soul wish to attain?</p>	<p>Um encontro entre dois: olhos nos olhos, face a face. E quando estiveres perto, eu arrancarei teus olhos e os porei no lugar dos meus e tu arrancarás meus olhos e os porás no lugar dos teus. Então eu te verei com os teus olhos ... e tu me verás com os meus. <i>J. L. Moreno</i></p> <p>A meeting of two: eye to eye, face to face. And when you are near I will tear your eyes out and place them instead of mine, and you will tear my eyes out and will place them instead of yours. Then I will look at you with your eyes ... and you will look at me with mine.</p>

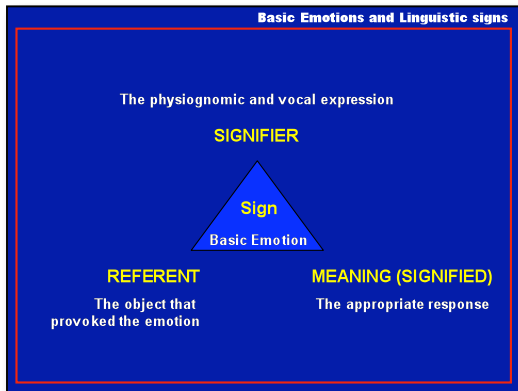
In spite of this, scientific psychology has been very slow to recognise this issue. In fact, only in 1984, after the work of Baron Cohen and collaborators, did the theme begin to be studied. These authors postulated a child's "Theory of Mind" which was absent in autistic children. Since they have developed tools for measuring "theory of mind", its absence could also be verified in acute schizophrenic patients. At the moment, there are interesting arguments about precocious imitation and identification as sources of Theory of Mind. So, we begin to have the possibility of studying the complexity of human emotions and affects.

However, there is a linguistic problem that influences current research. According to the Oxford Dictionary, *Affect*, as a noun, is an obsolete word in English. It has been substituted by the verb *to affect*, which highlights the concrete effect of the relationship. In its turn, the adjective *affective* qualifies all human behaviour that is neither cognitive nor motor activity. Thus, in scientific literature, *affect* is frequently used, but as a general concept or without a well defined meaning.

In the Continental European Languages, the noun *affect* remains with a connotation close to the Latin root word *affectus*, which means a mental and bodily disposition to something or someone. But there is no correspondent word in English. In the book I have mentioned, *The Nature of Emotions*, only Frijda and Lazarus, refer to *emotional attitude* or *sentiment* to take into account this relational dimension of affective phenomena. As we do in continental languages, I would like to call this relational component of the affective life *affect*. However, given the limitation of the American-English language, I will continue to speak about emotions.

We can start with the so-called basic emotions. Surprise, Happiness, Sadness, Fear, Anger, and Disgust, are simple emotions that seem to be independent of learning and culture. Think about anger and fear. They are linked to innate fight or flight responses, which are essential for survival. However, they also have a physiognomic, postural and vocal expression, which is perceived by other members of the same species. The receiver reacts frequently to this perception with the same behaviour as the sender: He also becomes afraid, seeks the object of fear and prepares himself to flee. This is why emotions are contagious. However, the receiver can react in another way, depending on the species, learning, hierarchical position in the group, previous state and other circumstances. For instance, he can react with aggression or without any explicit behaviour. At least, he has acquired information about an impending threat.

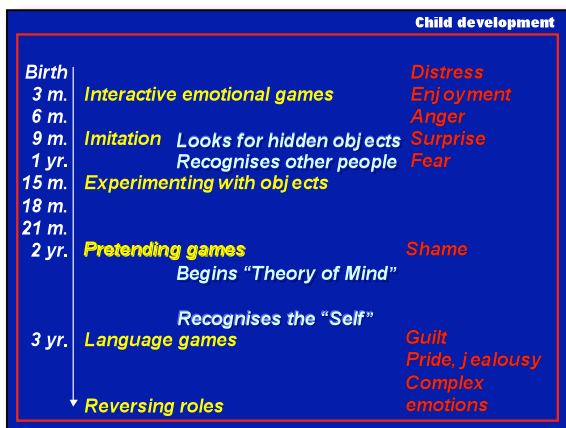
This is to say that basic emotions transmit information between pre-human and human animals. In fact, a basic emotion includes all the components of a language sign.



It has a signifier (the physiognomic or vocal expression), a meaning (the appropriate response to the emotion), and a referent (the object that provoked the emotion). Thus, it is possible to communicate by way of basic emotions, and researchers say that dolphins do communicate through cries, laughter or sighs. There are also interesting findings by Konrad Lorenz about the organization of social bonds based on the reaction to the expression of anger in geese. This also occurs in the communication of children and, perhaps, it is the basic communication

between us. Given the survival advantage of this relevant communication, we can understand that emotions could have evolved, from automatic and instinctive responses, to distinctive expressions useful for communication.

It is well known that the emotional communication between the child and his mother is essential for the organization of personality and affective bonds. After birth, the child begins to show expressions of distress and sorrow and then, progressively, while his nervous system matures and cognition develops, he shows smiles and laughter, anger, disgust and fear. However, the child switches easily from one expression to another without apparent reason, and it is difficult to know if every one of these expressions is genuinely linked to a relevant stimulus or if it is a mere result of imitation. Perhaps, both components are present, since the child is involved in an emotional interactive game. Later, he will be involved in another interactive game: the spoken language.



Playing the game of interactive emotions, the child learns to modify, attenuate, exaggerate or switch from one to another. In other words, he learns to control emotions. Much of his future life

depends on this precocious learning. The point is that emotions become organized, and this organization can be either harmonious or conflicting. Some basic emotions may be associated in order to form more complex emotions. This association may occur by the overlaying of two basic emotions, for instance sadness and anger, or by successive enabling of each emotion, for instance, when anger awakens fear. Sometimes, two or more emotions can be linked in a vicious circle, which seems to account for anxious states.

Complex emotions such as shame, guilt, jealousy and pride, develop later, by the 3rd year of life. In fact, these emotions presuppose that children have the cognitive notion of self as opposed to other people. This notion appears between the second and the third year of life, after a set of interactive pretending games through which the child recognizes other people and understands that their desires, feelings and beliefs may be different from his. In other words, he acquires a Theory about the Mind of other people.

From this time on, the subject mind processes his emotions and feelings, but also the emotions and feelings of other people. They are separate and mixed in differing degrees, in order to compose the personal identity.

Shame and guilt are interesting emotions because they regulate interpersonal distance. Shame appears when other people violate the intimacy of the subject, and guilt appears when the subject violates the intimate space of another significant person. However, since significant people are parts of the subject's mind, guilt is associated with shame, and their resolution is self-destructive. This is the psychopathological problem of guilt, but it is also an example of the complexity of human emotions.

Unless conditions of isolation and extreme neediness are present, adult emotions become less explicit but more complex and interactive. Since all human necessities are supplied by cooperation (or fighting) with other people, the whole mature emotional life is linked to interpersonal relationships. Perhaps we should not call these feelings emotions, since a distinctive and explicit expression is not so obvious, and the motor response is frequently inhibited. However they do exist and they can be felt, perceived and shared. I am speaking about admiration, tenderness, love, compassion, confidence, gratitude, respect, regard, intimacy and complicity, besides the more primitive and negative feelings of anger, disgust, guilt, shame, embarrassment, jealousy and envy.

These are complex emotions that link us, in a bilateral way, to each significant person we know and meet. They colour our interpersonal relationships. They are not fleeting, as basic emotions are, but tend to be permanently inscribed in our minds (and bodies), and are reactivated each time we meet (or remember) the related person. So, just as basic emotions are the words of emotional language, these emotional attitudes towards other people, or affects, as I call them, tend to be something like writing. That is to say, they are our mind's mapping of the social network, but they can also be shared with other minds in the same community. Thus they form the inter-subjective community and contribute to personal identity.

At the time of the independence of East Timor, the former Portuguese Prime Minister, António Guterres, defined the Portuguese Language Community as a community of affects and emotions. Thank goodness we have affects, and positive affects. We are not autistic, schizophrenic or paranoid. As for me, I am sorry that *affect* is an obsolete word in English. But I hope you can feel and share in our community of affects and emotions. Welcome.

