

Foreword

Emotions, moods, passions, feelings, and other affectively charged states are now recognized as essential in the human condition. With the fading of behaviorism and then cognitivism a generation ago, emotions and the rest won their rightful status within the human sciences as a legitimate topic. It's fair to ask how the field of affective science is doing.

Panteleimon Ekkekakis provides a frank, sobering, and unfortunately accurate answer: the basic building blocks of science – clearly defined concepts and valid tools to measure them – are missing from much of the research. Ekkekakis focuses on health research, but his diagnosis applies as well to any branch of human science, including education, social welfare, and psychology in general. Fortunately, he also provides a much needed practical remedy.

Progress in affective science has been slow – as if our party won the election but then failed to form a new government. The explanation for the slow progress may be that science is not simply the accumulation of facts. Creation of a new science is not a transition from a blank slate to a scientific paradigm, but from one paradigm to another. The initial pre-scientific paradigm is the set of everyday, lay folk concepts and assumptions. We inherit concepts from angst to zeal with the preconceptions that accompany them. Astronomy, physics, and biology all show how difficult this transition is and how qualitatively different the initial folk concepts typically are from later scientific ones.

The affective domain is heterogeneous. The everyday concept of emotion is too heterogeneous, for it includes object-directed states (such as loving someone) and object-free or free-floating ones (such as malaise or anxiety) and includes long-term states (such as loving someone) and short-term ones (such as startle). To assess an emotional episode, one must therefore consider its object and its temporal dimension; simply checking a word on a list hardly suffices.

The affective domain lacks a superordinate term. For that reason, I used the cumbersome phrase “emotions, moods, passions, feelings,

and other affectively charged states.” “Affect” is now sometimes used as the superordinate, but its boundaries are vague. I especially want to distinguish affect used as a superordinate from Core Affect. Core Affect is an ingredient in most (not all) emotions, moods, and so forth, but not a superordinate – much as flour is an ingredient in most (but not all) baked goods, but would not do as a substitute for the term “baked good.”

The book you hold in your hands is a powerful plea for a qualitative shift in the way research is conducted. It is a wise, thoughtful, and much needed guidebook for the transition from a prescientific to a scientific paradigm. If researchers read this book, they will be convinced, they will change their behavior, and their research will advance. I’m often asked to recommend a measure for emotion or mood, and I never have a simple answer. Now I do: read Ekkekakis.

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