

# Caring Culture: with each other, for each other. A conceptual foundation through attachment theory and cognitive theory of moral judgment development

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**Abstract-** The article deals with the concept of care from a phenomenological perspective. For this purpose, the connections between attachment theory and care are first explained before care is embedded in the cognitive theory of moral judgment. The concepts are related to each other and finally presented in a phenomenological map. The concepts presented in this paper are used in an in-service training series for teachers.

**Keywords** – care, attachment theory, theory of moral judgment development, developmental perspective, phenomenology, being-in-the-world

## I. INTRODUCTION

This article serves as the foundation for the event series on the topic *Caring Culture With each other, for each other* organized by Kerstin Zechner and Simone Breit, heads of the Departments of Diversity and Early Childhood Education at the University College of Teacher Education in Lower Austria in Baden [1], as well as for the lectures in the areas of Caring Generations, Caring Interacts, Caring Values, Caring Education, Daring Society, Caring Humor, and Care Grows. At the same time, this outline represents an groundwork based on the works of Wiesner on the *theory of structural dynamics* [2, 3, 4], the works of Wiesner and Gebauer on the *theory of being-in-the-world* [5, 6, 7, 8], the *theory of value development* by Breit and Wiesner [4, 9] and the *theory of adaptive capacity and handling as authorization* through enrichment and enlargement (in German: Bewältigungsfähigkeit) by Zechner and Wiesner [10, 11].

The present article attempts to develop an outline for a *diversity-sensitive* pedagogical understanding of *care* as concern and preoccupation (in German: Sorge), which may differentiate itself from the everyday understanding of *care*. To do so, diverse ideas and theories need to be clarified, as well as terms illuminated, whereby terms, strictly speaking, also represent ideas.

Etymologically, the term *care* (as an idea) initially means *to take heed* [12] and also refers to a specific form of *oversight* and *charge* [13]. The old English connection of the term (*caru, cearu*) with the meaning of the affects of *sorrow, anxiety, and grief* as *burdens of the mind* that require *serious mental attention* is also documented. Looking at the old Germanic context, the word originates from the sphere of *lamentation, sorrow, and grief*, which gives rise to the phrases *take care of* and *take care*, thereby conceptually developing an understanding of affection as *have fondness for* and *have an inclination* [14, 15, 16].

The article serves as a *phenomenological* sketch to explore the term, concept, meaning and significance of *care* (also for lectures) through the eye of ideas and theories, while offering a structurally dynamic framework that is primarily based on *being-in-the-world*. The declared opponents of phenomenology, according to Rombach [17], are any form of naive reductionism and simplistic self-reduction that overlook and disregard both the depth aspects and the foundations.

Therefore, an attempt is made to do justice to the concept of *care* by making the diverse aspects, which may also compete with each other, visible with the greatest possible openness. Each expansive perspective counters narrow-minded ways of thinking and enables actual foundations that take into account contradictions and competing considerations. This also requires an exploration of the development of thinking and speaking about thinking and speaking in order to regain the necessary depth of understanding on a topic. Precisely for this reason, the concept of *care* always implies treating someone in practice as one of us, as a person similar to myself, or unfolding a form in which the respective treatment is determined.

From a phenomenological perspective, the article is not simple, as various phenomena need to be considered in order to adequately address the subject matter. Moreover, the article is subject to certain requirements that must be met in order to ensure a comprehensive examination. The goal is not simply to continue familiar discourse, but rather to enrich it. Any omission of arguments relating to phenomena incurs the cost of reduction, resulting in the loss of interconnected ideas. Therefore, the article must allocate the minimal necessary space and place to accomplish the development of an appropriate *theory of care*. Such an exposition takes time, and the consistent aim is to gain a different, new, and perhaps even foreign perspective on a complex phenomenon beyond ordinary thinking. At the same time, the theories and aspects are presented and discussed in relation to *care*, one after another, due to the *linear* nature of language.

## II. CARE AND ATTACHMENT THEORY

The active acquisition of connections between judgments and actions in *relation* to the world has been clearly demonstrated by Bowlby [18, 19, 20] and Ainsworth [21, 22] through the development of *attachment theory* as a *theory of bonding*. The theory of attachment and *being-in-the-world* provides insights into the early childhood development of active perceptual activity, as well as the formation, organization, and structure of *thinking* and *feeling*.

The distinguishable moments of a successful attachment (B+), which can be explored in greater depth, ideally lead to a blending as a fundamental capacity that balances attachment (B<sub>3</sub>) integratively and transformatively, resulting in a successful personal culture as a supporting foundation. All B+ moments are part of the dynamics of human personality and support all human capacities and movements of learning, communicating, interacting, punctuating and all forms of *care* (see figure 1). However, it is also possible for a mixture to appear and become fixed, in which one of the two maladaptive orientations (A, C as stress phenomena up to disorders; see figure 2 and 3) is overemphasized, thereby suppressing other beneficial possibilities.

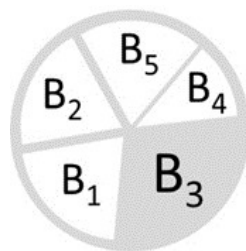


Figure 1. The moments of successful attachment and relationship

An essential aspect of the theory is the development of an intrapsychic structure that shapes *internal coherence*, which is connected to the formation of an interpsychic structure that negotiates *processes of correspondence* with the world [8, 23]. From infant research, it is known that even infants actively and non-reductionistically acquire a complex and comprehensive understanding of the world through engagement in relationships, initially sorting and systematizing the world through ordering rules and criteria. Everything acquired to a greater or lesser extent in the early years forms the foundation for later learning, from language acquisition to prosocial and social relationship formation [24, 25, 26, 27]. Thus, all precursor forms of moral judgment can already be found from the sixth to eighth month of life, structurally present in further development, based on experiences and pre-rational and abductive evaluations of the world and individuals within it [28, 29]. These foundations are the beginning of all foundations of *care*. Moreover, all expectations of relationships (*with* the world) form from the first months of life through active interaction, communication, and punctuations with attachment figures [23, 30]. These structures, arising from expectations and episodic memories, shape what is known as *relationship patterns*. The further

procedure concerning *care* utilizes the reorganization and phenomenological reconstruction of Wiesner and Gebauer's *attachment theory* [5, 6, 7, 8] to provide an actual foundation by making insertions *visible* for the phenomena of *care*.

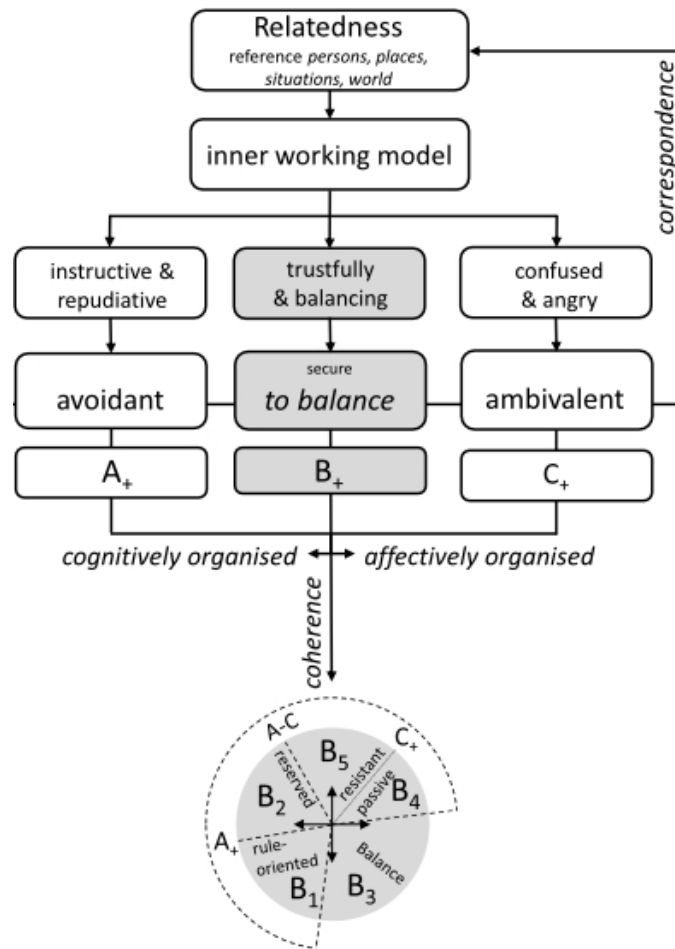


Figure 2. Development of moments of attachment and relationship: Being-in-the-world

The structural-dynamic modeling by Wiesner and Gebauer intertwines the *ABC-model of attachment* by Ainsworth [21, 22], the *ABCD-extension* by Main and Solomon [31, 32, 33], the *styles of adult attachment* by Bartholomew [34, 35, 36, 37], the *location and axis clarification* of attachment moments by van IJzendoorn et al. [38], the *Dynamic-Maturational Model of Attachment and Adaptation (DMM)* by Crittenden [39, 40], the *supplementation* by Wilcox and Baim [41], the *theory of manifestations of temper* (in German: Gemüt) according to Schröder [98] with the *theory of symbolization* as form-giving according to Cassirer [42, 43, 44], the sign-theoretical *Organon-model* by Bühler [45] and the *field-theoretical model of structural dynamics* by Wiesner [2, 3, 8]. Attachment theory, as a *theory of being-in-the-world* and *being-in-relationship* as *relatedness*, fundamentally describes the structure of these *relationship patterns* and is based on detailed, phenomenological observations of infants, as well as adolescents and adults. The description of attachment patterns has led to *three* distinguishable forms of attachment and relationship (as C, A, B moments) as well as several subgroups (C+, A+, B+; see figure 2). According to Wiesner and Gebauer, attachment theory is fundamentally a *relationship structure theory* that, in the context of *care*, enables the description of the development of coherence and the capacity for correspondence between persons and communities in relation to phenomena of *care*.

At the same time, the theory enables an understanding of being-in-relationship *and* moral and ethical development. The balancing, or mixed, form of attachment and relationship across all B modalities has both an *affective orientation* (B<sub>4</sub>-B<sub>5</sub> moments; see figure 1 and 2) and a *cognitive orientation* (B<sub>1</sub>-B<sub>2</sub> moments). Promoting all B moments (B<sub>1-2</sub> to B<sub>3-4</sub>) with reference to context, situation, events, temporality, and spatiality creates internal, coherent (inner) *working models of attachment* and relationship (representational and judgmental models), which in

turn shape the *tone* and *color* of correspondence with the world and are shaped and influenced by the experiences of correspondence themselves. The distinguishable modalities of attachment and relationship (B+; see figure 1) thus ideally lead to a mixed state as a capacity that *balances* attachment (B<sub>3</sub>) in such a way that a successful personal culture can emerge as a foundational basis and a personal ethos of judgment finding.

The B-moments differentiate under a phenomenological perspective into the *passive moment* (B<sub>4</sub>) and the *resistant moment* (B<sub>5</sub>) as the two *affectively organized modalities* that point to the *I-You-World perspective* or *ego-world-perspective* (in German: Ich-Du-Welt-Perspektive). The passive moment represents the ability to withhold, endure, receive, accept, and retract. The term *passive* etymologically derives from *capable of being acted upon*, *expressive of being affected by some action*, *capable of feeling* and *passion* (sensitivity, endurance, affect) and means *not acting*. The adjective *passionate* develops from being enthusiastic and passionate [14, 15]. However, when passion becomes *heated*, the *resistant moment* (B<sub>5</sub>) becomes apparent, as it involves the *ability to oppose* (*making opposition*), resist, *separate*, and *defend*, thereby giving rise to a form of autonomy (more as *independence* and less as self-reliance – in German: Eigenständigkeit) through rejection of receiving and accepting [5, 6, 7, 8].

In summary, the *passive moment* (B<sub>4</sub>) signifies the ability to withhold, endure, and retract, thereby enabling and facilitating *being with and not setting the tone* alone [9]. The *passive moment* refers to *active listening*, co-listening, co-seeing, participating, and, above all, an active, sensitive receptivity [45]. It represents a *self-being in and with the world* (in German: Zu-Sich-Sein und Sich-Sorgen). In the context of Rosa [46], this is where the *moments of resonance* and *world transformation* as well as the *moments of resonating* are located. *Care*, at this pre-symbolic and pre-rational developmental stage, involves empathy as *sympathy* and all forms and capacities of *emotional contagion* and *resonating ability* (*compassion*). In essence, affect and emotions perform cognitive functions [47, 48], which is why the term *global empathy* (or empathy of the first order) can be used here.

The *resistant moment* (B<sub>5</sub>) refers to the capacity to resist, oppose, and defend against the passive moment, representing some forms of *resilience* and resistance [49]. It involves emphasizing one's own will in terms of self-determination and autonomy as *independence*. Through the development of informative pointing gestures (in German: Zeigegeste, Zeigen) and active imagination, a *participatory empathy* (or empathy of the second order) emerges, leading to an understanding of the feelings, affects, and emotions of others (and things as animals and plants) through the distinction between (one)self (as I) and others. *Care* here denotes independent *participation* and *involvement*, allowing for *cooperative participation* and a *pro-social capacity* that is directed towards complementarity through the passive moment. The proto-rational developmental stage primarily offers the development of imagination and simulation, which leads to the emergence of *pro-social* forms of *care* (welfare, caregiving; in German: Fürsorge).

This two *B-moments* primarily encompass the significance of the concept of *experience*, thereby encompassing both the *passive*, receptive meaning of sensory perception as *capable of being acted upon* and the *active* process of experiencing as *ability to oppose*, giving rise to a sense of *experientiality* (in German: Erfahrungheit). This comprehensive unity of the concept of experience enables the *reciprocal* influence between *receptive* experience and *productive* exploration, which are inseparably linked to learning and the *affective-organised* manifestations of *care* as *being-with-oneself* (letting-come-toward-oneself, holding itself, experience-in-itself) and *being-with-others* and *being-with-the-world* (sympathy, compassion, emotional contagion, being-together-with, interrelation) and *being-opposite-of* (exposure, revelation, mutuality, vis-à-vis) [50, 51]. In particular, these B-moments lead to a *tonal aspect*, involving *qualitative* peculiarities that become perceptible through concept formation and meaning generation, similar to *the tone of a voice* or the *impression of pressure* itself [52].

Such a tonal aspect, like the *intonation*, *dialect coloration*, can be created in a *text* through *italicization*, *bolding*, *underlining*, or *coloring* (coloration) and the introduction of *ideas*. This approach leads to the *highlighting* of *indexical relations* and to mental images as *icons par excellence* [53]. It also invites special attention as the identification (*indexing*) of indicative words as tokens marks contexts as *con-texts*, thus shaping the unfolding of events spatially and temporally and interacting in a referential and indicative manner. Thus, even in texts, a form of *care* for ideas and concepts can be expressed as signposts. The *affective* B-moments clearly correspond to the etymology of *care*, particularly in relation to the proximity of emotions such as *lament*, *sorrow*, and *grief*.

All expression phenomena as *tonal aspects* constitute the essence and foundation of *all affective moments of attachment*. In the context of the two affective moments, the world is understood as a *co-world*, and experiencing is perceived as an integration of diversity. The concept of *reciprocity* here refers to *interrelation*. Empathy manifests in two affective forms, namely in a *global* and *participatory* gestalt.

The *distancing moment* (B<sub>2</sub>), as the first *cognitively organized* moment, refers to being able to recognize something from a *distance* (analytically and intellectualized), including *self-recognition* and *self-evaluation*. Etymologically, it means *keeping something at a distance*, *leaving something clearly behind*, and *moving away* from something [15]. In Latin, the term *distantica* refers to a *standing apart* as a *dispute* or *disagreement*, while *distantem*

(nominative *distans*) means *standing apart, separate, or distant* [12, 14]. Essentially, the term signifies a *controversy*, specifically regarding the attachment theory and the disagreement with *feelings* and the *affective* moments. Abstract-cognitive thinking opens up the realm of *objectivity*, analysis, and the desire for knowledge, creation, and optimization [9, 54].

It also implies a certain detachment from other people, one's own feelings, and the feelings of others, as well as a general reservation towards experiencing and perceiving. *Care* in this context should be viewed from the perspective of *perspective-taking* as *third-order empathy*, which is based on a higher form of *cognitive-abstract* imaginative activity. The development of perspective-taking (*theory of mind*) enables human understanding that both one's own and others' consciousness are comprehensive constructs of mental, subjective acts, and representations. This leads to an understanding of opinions, viewpoints, needs, preferences, views, and narratives within subjective realities and an understanding that the opinions of others can differ from one's own. From this understanding, the concept of *objectivity* arises particularly. Through this objectification, as well as through self-evaluations, *care* becomes *self-care*, that is, the concern for one's *own self* (in German: *Selbst-Sorge*).

The *regulatory* moment ( $B_1$ ), as the second *cognitively organized* moment, etymologically refers to *following rules* and order *correctly*, signifying both Latin *regere* to *direct, guide, rule* [15] and the *regulation* of something as *arranging* it. In Latin, the term *regula* refers to *rule* and *straight piece of wood* [12, 14]. *Care* concerns itself with *just care* as empathic thinking of injustice and caring through (regulated) *justice, social rules* and *institutionalization*, leading to an understanding of the world as *environment* (*vis-à-vis*). In this context, *care* can be considered as *fourth-order empathy*, based on the understanding of *social rules*. The both *cognitive* B-moments refer to the etymology of *care* in terms of serious *mental* attention and the burden of the *cognitive mind*. The concept of reciprocity applies to both cognitive moments, signifying *mutuality* and a *vis-à-vis*. All phenomena of *symbolization* constitute the essence and foundation of all *cognitive* moments of attachment and leads to an *observer perspective* (in German: *Beobachterperspektive*) in relation to a *vis-à-vis*.

The *balancing* and compensatory form of attachment and relationship, therefore, emerges from both *cognitive* moments ( $B_1$ - $B_2$ ) and *affective* moments ( $B_4$ - $B_5$ ; see figure 1, 2 and 3) and their *range of movement*. The interaction and dynamically available relationality of all B-moments ( $B_{1-2}$  to  $B_{4-5}$ ) in relation to context, situation, occurrence, temporality, and spatiality create internal, coherent working models of attachment, relationship, encounter, and contact (models of representation). *Balanced attachment* enables a concrete connection to greater creativity, curiosity, and expressive capacity [55, 56, 57], as well as a higher level of deliberate, successful problem-solving compared to individuals with one-sided and insecure patterns of relating [58, 59]. With regard to *care*, the balancing moment of attachment and relationship aims to integrate *all B+ moments* in a *balanced* manner.

From infancy, *avoidant*  $A_{1-2}$  moments as well as *ambivalent*  $C_{1-2}$  moments can occur as disorders (see figure 3), which also have an impact on the respective understanding of *care*. From preschool age, both avoidant type  $A^+$  moments and ambivalent type  $C^+$  moments can arise, which can further differentiate throughout early school age, resembling the layers of an onion, until adolescence.

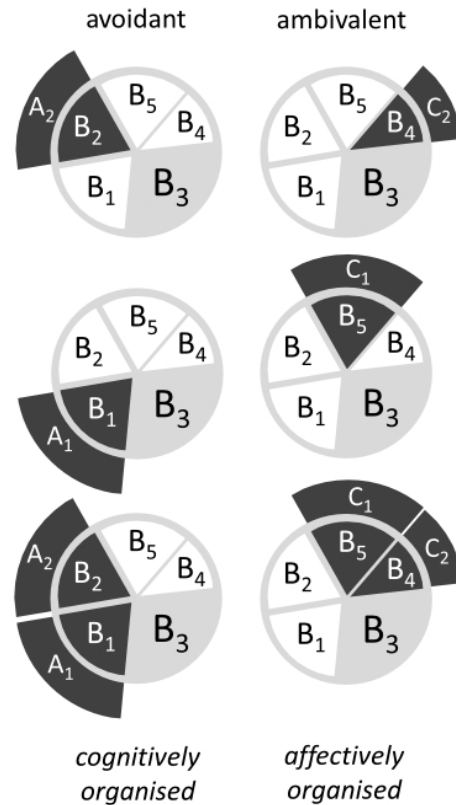


Figure 3. Disorders in the theory of attachment and relationship

However, the focus of this article is not on these disorders, which can be explored in the *theory of relationship and attachment* by Wiesner and Gebauer [7, 8]. What is important here is that the further differentiation of  $A_1+$  moments as *cognitive* distortions in relation to *care* can lead to the development of *higher forms of regularity*, which can also be considered compulsive and demand obedience, hierarchy, loyalty, and an unhealthy drive for achievement, resulting in a *mechanistic devaluation of others* (*dehumanization* through the denial of *human nature*). On the other hand, all  $A_2+$  moments as *cognitive* distortions lead to an overemphasis on *abstract thinking* and an overload of the cognitive mind. This results in an *isolating self*, artificial thinking, and often a negative self-image that devalues other individuals in particular (*dehumanization* as a form of *uniquely human*) [54, 60, 61, 62]. The *affective*  $C_1+$  moments tend to lead to an *effectance motivation*, involving an affective desire for control, predictability, and reduction of uncertainties. These moments often give rise to punishing, threatening, and highly aggressive phenomena in interpersonal relationships and in relation to *care* as an excluding participation (such as a moralizing relationship with animals or plants, in which only a few - certainly not all - are allowed to participate). On the other hand, the *affective*  $C_2+$  moments present a passive seeking of help, a disarming and *highly helpless self*. This gives rise to phenomena of *pro-sociality motivation* [54, 63, 64, 65], an overshadowing of the need for relationships, and above all, the avoidance of loneliness and separation, which is why a *helper syndrome* can also arise in the sense of *helpless helpers* when considering *care*.

Only the relational aspect of the two affective and the two cognitive moments creates, with the third element of what is to be accepted or rejected, the primary source of *accommodation* and *assimilation* according to Piaget [66, 67, 68], whereby a balance as equilibration is sought in this structure. The purpose of equilibration is fundamentally the preservation of *the whole and the parts* [69], resulting in a comprehensive whole (B3 in various modifications, tones, and shades; see figure 3) with two inseparable poles of accommodation and assimilation that indicate personal growth. Thus, alongside all productive B-moments as deviations and distortions, insecure-avoidant predominantly *cognitively* colored A-modalities as well as insecure-ambivalent *affectively* toned C-moments can develop, and in addition, a more or less pronounced disorganized pattern (as D moments) can also emerge. The D+ moments exhibit characteristics of both A+ and C+ and therefore do not form a distinct main group but are considered a mixed form (A-C). Of course, with this theory of relationship and attachment by Wiesner & Gebauer, one can also explore the

symptoms of the COVID crisis, which give rise to different manifestations of reactions to COVID as a global phenomenon. Similarly, at the beginning of the Covid crisis, distinct forms of care were observed that significantly evolved over time.

### III. THE DEVELOPMENT OF CARE THROUGH THE DEVELOPMENT OF MORAL JUDGMENT

Freed from theoretical paradigms and interpretations as tonal readings (in German: Lesarten), Kohlberg's cognitive theory of moral judgment development [70, 71] fundamentally leads, both phenomenologically and structurally, to a concept of *six moral stages* and *three moral levels* in terms of a qualitative sequence of changes [72]. The three levels represent a progressively higher degree of differentiation and integration of thinking and feeling as a whole or as a specific form (in German: Gestalt) and they represent three different types of relationships between the *ego*, the *self* and *social rules* and expectations. The concept and idea of levels clarify a sequence of development [73], through which the respective form of development can be explored. On the other hand, the concept of stages refers to the substantive character of a change and indicates a paradigm shift, whereby stages do not merely describe additive accumulation. The crucial aspect in Kohlberg's theory is that each lower stage is included in the higher stage [74].

The insights about stages and levels that emerge from the systematic and logical reconstruction of presented arguments in questioning situations regarding moral dilemmas fundamentally correspond with different forms of care (in German: Sorge) and to be *concerned* as *concerning oneself* (in German: Sich-Sorgen). Methodologically, attention is given to the so-called bootstrapping strategy [75, 76]. This strategy involves a mutual bootstrapping and suggests that empirical (abductive, inductive) and analytical (deductive) steps in thinking and evaluation alternate [77]. Thus, according to Habermas [78], it is a rational process of post- and reconstructive reasoning aimed at determining meaningful connections.

Every transition in these pendulum phenomena, in the sense of *spiral learning*, can lead to both level and stage transitions. The processes of these transitions, which are also accompanied by maturation crises, are to be understood as learning and acquiring a *balance* between *cognitive* and *affective* structures [79] – thereby creating a unique correspondence with attachment theory. In each higher stage, higher forms of solutions, in terms of constructive and mature judgments that reflect understanding, can be offered by the respondents in response to existing problems and conflicts. The process towards a higher form is irreversible according to Kohlberg's theory, and abstraction in the development of thinking and judgment increases across stages initially, only to establish a connection with the first stage at a higher level in the final stage. Kohlberg refers to these stages as successive forms of *reciprocity*, each more differentiated and generalized than the previous one [80]. The proposed structures in Kohlberg's theory are therefore simultaneously deep structures of self and ego identity [74] – particularly in relation to the development of *care*.

#### A. *The pre-conventional level*

The interaction at the pre-conventional level as the foundation of *care* can be demonstrated through the reciprocity of action perspectives [73, 78]. In the two pre-conventional stages, the focus is primarily on learning both an authority-driven complementarity and an interest-guided symmetry, where in both stages, the perspective of *I-You-World* and the *observational perspective* are more or less distinctly incorporated as a basis and more or less explicitly integrated as the foundation.

##### *Stage 1: Heteronomous Morality*

In the first stage, the pre-conventional subject has access to themselves, while social norms and expectations remain external [70]. Moral requirements are not understood from their meaning; rather, behavior is immediately oriented towards consequences (punishments, rewards), power, and obligated obedience. With reference to Habermas [81, 82], the first stage is oriented towards the moral-practical discourse and primarily concerns the validity claim of *rightness* as a set of values. Therefore, moral behavior simply means accepting the *moral as a one-way street* [72] in order to avoid physical consequences and punishments, as well as to demonstrate obedience. Judgments regarding *good* and *bad behavior* are thus determined by the respective authority as the source of *rules* and *norms*, and considering multiple perspectives is omitted. Such judgments and moral understanding correspond

to a heteronomous grasp, where the structure of justification is primarily based on external constraints and seemingly *binding rules* [77, 83], with the *own perspective* and the *perspective of authority* being confused [70].

### *Stage 2: Person Orientation and Exchange*

The second stage leads to an understanding of *reciprocity* and *relationship* as *interrelation*, whereby the understanding of cooperation becomes the criterion for judgment, decision-making, and action in general. The action-guiding power of authority figures according to Habermas [78] in the first phase is no longer sufficient for one's own development *to meet the cooperative needs* and to develop action coordination based on *understanding* and *participating*. In the foreground are initial notions of *equality* [72], which allow for solutions that are not dependent on authorities but can emerge through *agreement* and participation. Justice in this stage is still relative because *what is fair is just* [84] meaning anything that constitutes an more or less *equivalent exchange* and can reach a *mutual agreement*. This stage is characterized mainly by the tendency to maintain important pro-social relationships [79], even though the world is still primarily structured from one's own perspective. In this stage, it is fundamentally acknowledged that others have interests and make demands. However, participation and agreement can also be shifted towards promoting competitive behavior, leading to *strategic action* [78] in relationships involving both deceptive and non-deceptive types of behavior. In this stage, there may also be a tendency to avoid complexity, as well as to reject differences. In the third stage, a restructuring occurs towards an *overpersonal authority*, and the polarization between *success-oriented* and *understanding-oriented* attitudes is opened up.

### *B. The pre-conventional level*

In essence, every conventional morality as the foundation of *care* is based on rules, external obligations, and accountability, as well as the function of role models, which provide guiding prohibitions and commands that can be cognitively understood and rewarded for compliance. The point of reference is therefore the *respective reference group* as the *social group* in which the lifeworld is directly experienced [70, 71, 78]. Relationships demand respect and gratitude, leading to the formation of role relations at this level. It involves the internalization of expectations originating from impersonal authorities and the *generalization of behavioral patterns*.

### *Stage 3: Interpersonal Conformity*

The third stage is the *first stage of conventional thinking* [70, 72], in which the *standpoint of sociality* is significantly included, making roles and expectations the guiding criteria. In this stage, expectations are attributed to others, and it is assumed that individuals can empathize with at least two different roles that relate to each other [79]. *Self-evaluation* and *social recognition* represent the two essential aspects of the same matter, and the expectations and role attributions of others become the new standard of what is right in terms of group orientation. Conflicts, in particular, can lead to groups *distancing* themselves from each other and burdening each other. In this stage, personal interests are subordinated through conflict avoidance in relation to conformity. Hence, there is a desire to be respected in one's own eyes and in the eyes of other people [84], which promotes and justifies *stereotypical behavior*. From this perspective, the stage also harbors the danger of group egoism and the *active combat* against *foreign* interests [72]. At the same time, an initial understanding of *rights* and *duties* is established without gaining a comprehensive systemic perspective.

### *Stage 4: Social System and Conscience*

In the fourth stage, the frame of reference expands, and the *diversity* from which the social fabric of society is composed is recognized. Derived from this is the criterion of *social order* [70, 72], understood as a requirement for *societal well-being*. The involvement in forms and types of *family relationships* [79] was dissolved in the third stage, thus opening up an objectifying, interindividual space. In the fourth stage, individuals no longer relate to each other *personally* but are now *anonymous* to each other and obliged to maintain a certain *distance*. A new dependency is formed on the maintenance of rules, norms, and laws, which also opens up new critical capacity to voice *objections*



against rules. However, fundamentally, subordination is still enacted, which can extend to *self-denial*. Institutions now serve the social system, providing the respective *moral guidelines* and influencing the conscience [78]. Kohlberg [85] primarily refers to the fourth stage as the attitude of *law and order*, as obedience to the law becomes the highest commandment due to the integration of *law and morality*, significantly shaping the social aspect, i.e., *society*. The individual thus adopts the standpoint of the system that establishes *roles and rules* [84] and is perceived as an *authority*. This gives rise to the experiential and communicable conflict between the *individual* and the *societal system* – although this *reciprocity* can be actively reflected upon and sharply criticized, the law serves society, the group, or the institution in all judgments at this stage.

### C. *The Postconventional Level*

Each postconventional morality as the foundation of *care* is based on universal *principles* and (or) *ethical criteria*, rather than rules, and is more focused on ideal images related to judgments and decisions. Rules, in general, converge with each other, while principles only conflict at the metaethical level [74]. Therefore, principles form an ideal image for the selection of rules. However, principles themselves are based on the act of reconstructing *weightings* between differentiable claims. Through the postconventional stages, world perspectives and rules become subject to questioning due to *increasing complexity*. Particularly at the sixth stage, the *I-You-World perspective* and the *observer's perspective* come *together* in a way that allows mutual coordination and interrelations.

#### *Stage 5: Societal Utility and Individual Rights*

At the fifth stage, independent, *principle-guided* thinking and judgment develop postconventionally, resulting in a deeper understanding of the *plurality* in the world compared to the fourth stage. The internal perspective of one's own society and the social framework of the preceding stage are dissolved for the first time, allowing detachment from purely social order. *Society* is observed as an observer, and this distancing enables the abandonment of the predominant identification of morality and law at stage 4 [70, 71, 79]. This leads to a form of *tolerance* that changes the comprehensive understanding of social, prosocial, and cultural backgrounds. Now, an equally valid diversity of *value orientations* is recognized, which is why there can no longer be just *one truth* or *one law* [72]. Therefore, judgments and decisions can only be made by recourse to so-called *fundamental values*, as even the legal order is not inherently desirable but also *in need of legitimization* [79].

According to Kohlberg [86], the fifth stage serves intelligent *law-creating*, whereby a social order is defined by criteria and principles (instead of rules) only. At the same time, criteria are seen as changeable designs, enabling an overarching *law-making*. Thus, the fourth stage, which primarily focuses on the preservation and adherence to laws, should not be confused with the law-creating understanding of the fifth stage. According to Kohlberg et al. [87], the fifth stage offers a highly appropriate understanding of the *elements of any morality* that have been *partially institutionalized* in constitutional democracies. However, all social rights, contracts, and obligations are prioritized *over the individual and the person*, thereby regulating different perspectives through *formal mechanisms of agreement* [84]. In the fifth stage, contradictions in social agreements can already be recognized, named, and integrated to a limited extent into the sixth stage.

While the fourth stage primarily focused on enforcing rules and sanctions, the fifth stage *critically* examines the processes of rules to ensure the procedures and success as much as possible. The fourth stage is therefore based on respect for the individual and depends on the demand for just laws and regulations as *instruments for securing human rights* [72].

#### *Stage 6: Universal Ethical Principles*

The sixth stage has always been subject to ongoing criticism, particularly regarding whether this stage can be taught and be a task in the education and upbringing of children, adolescents, and adults. However, Habermas [88], in reference to Kohlberg's theory, also writes that the fifth stage still aims for stable, non-critiqueable solutions, which is why it particularly *requires* a sixth stage in terms of the *learning process* and also in the *Piaget tradition*. Essentially, understanding and comprehending the world at this stage lead to the realization that no individual has to submit to the judgment of majority opinion in a society. Therefore, according to Kohlberg et al. [87], Stage 6 is characterized by legitimization as *acceptance for persons* (in German: *Anerkennung*), *benevolence*, and a *personal interest in justice*. Acceptance for persons (not individuals) also means the ability to respect the world as a whole

and is based on both *attitudes* and *principles*. A higher level of *prosociality* comes to the forefront, namely *benevolence and sympathy* as a higher form of empathy through the combination of an *understanding of what a person is* [87, 88] and an understanding of the *condition humaine* within which *person* exist and interact, thereby striving for an *ideal mutual role assumption*. In the sixth stage (as *fifth-order empathy*), one's own *active* and *constructive* perception of the world and persons as persons takes center stage, as well as an understanding of one's own consciousness, namely perceiving the world through personal concepts, biases, and life references. In essence, according to Kohlberg et al. [87, 88], all *ethical* fundamental values can be summarized into a single principle of *care*, namely the *equal acceptance* for the person and their *human dignity*.

Kohlberg's theory emphasizes cognition and is based on a cognitive understanding of morality, encompassing a range from ideal perspective-taking to justice [73]. Many key points of Kohlberg's developmental model can be considered empirically *established* according to Breit and Eckensberger [77] and have been examined in *different cultures* [89, 90]. However, the intellectualizing, hypothetical, and socially oriented moral dilemma stories used to test Kohlberg's theory also give rise to criticism [91, 92, 93, 94]. However, there are also advocates and approaches for reorganization and restructuring that have thoroughly engaged with the criticism and more or less addressed the underlying questions [72, 74, 78, 95, 96, 97]. According to Oser, none of the critiques have been able to destroy *Kohlberg's theoretical framework* as a paradigm. [74]. This observation also applies to the fundamental phenomena of *attachment theory*, whose basic manifestations of relationship and attachment were already documented in Schröder's work in 1931 [98]. There is, therefore, a strong support for Kohlberg's theory in terms of its validation, due to its high correspondence with attachment theory, which clearly demonstrates how closely related the observable *phenomena* are, or rather, that they are likely the same phenomena occurring at different structural levels and in distinct manifestations across layers and levels, subject to the phenomenon of *structural similarity*. Thus, both theories contain essential insights into the *phenomenon of care* (in German: Phänomen der Sorge).

Returning to some aspects of the criticism: The *affective, prosocial, and caring* perspectives and their effects are often *overlooked* in the intellectual approach to dilemmas. Nevertheless, it has not yet been possible to refute the theory in its current structure [74]. The high resilience of the theory is probably due to its phenomenological correspondence with human development. However, the Kohlbergian approach cannot fully comprehend the gap between mature cognitive judgment and actual concrete action. This *judgment-action phenomenon* needs to be further clarified and has not been convincingly resolved so far [5, 6, 8, 74].

#### IV. THE DEVELOPMENT OF CARE THROUGH ATTACHMENT, RELATIONSHIP, AND MORAL JUDGMENT

Kohlberg refers to a stage *zero* in his theory as a pre-moral and pre-cognitive structure [99]. This stage 0 (or pre-rational or rational level) establishes the foundations and structures for *all* subsequent stages in Kohlberg's theory and also serves as the source for *transformations* of stages through the capacity for *accommodation*. However, there are few well-founded conceptions for *stage 0* that are tested or evaluated by phenomena. Attachment theory enables a sharpening of both stage 0 and all subsequent stages, particularly providing an understanding of *transformative learning processes*. Returning to the *affectively charged B-moments of attachment theory*, it can be noted that initially, the active infant in stage 0 experiences and lives *reciprocity*, which can be described as both *mutuality* (as vis-à-vis) and *interrelation* (as intermeshing). Interrelation (in German: Wechselseitigkeit) emphasizes the exchange, sequence, and dynamic change of the world, giving rise to perspectives that regulate curiosity, interests, and foster *active, productive, and prosocial* being-in-relationship and *being-in-the-world*. The so-called *passive* modality (B<sub>4</sub>) in interrelation therefore refers to the highest capacity of human accommodation, from which structures initially develop based on *similarities* (see figure 4).

## Theory of Judgement and Care through Relatedness

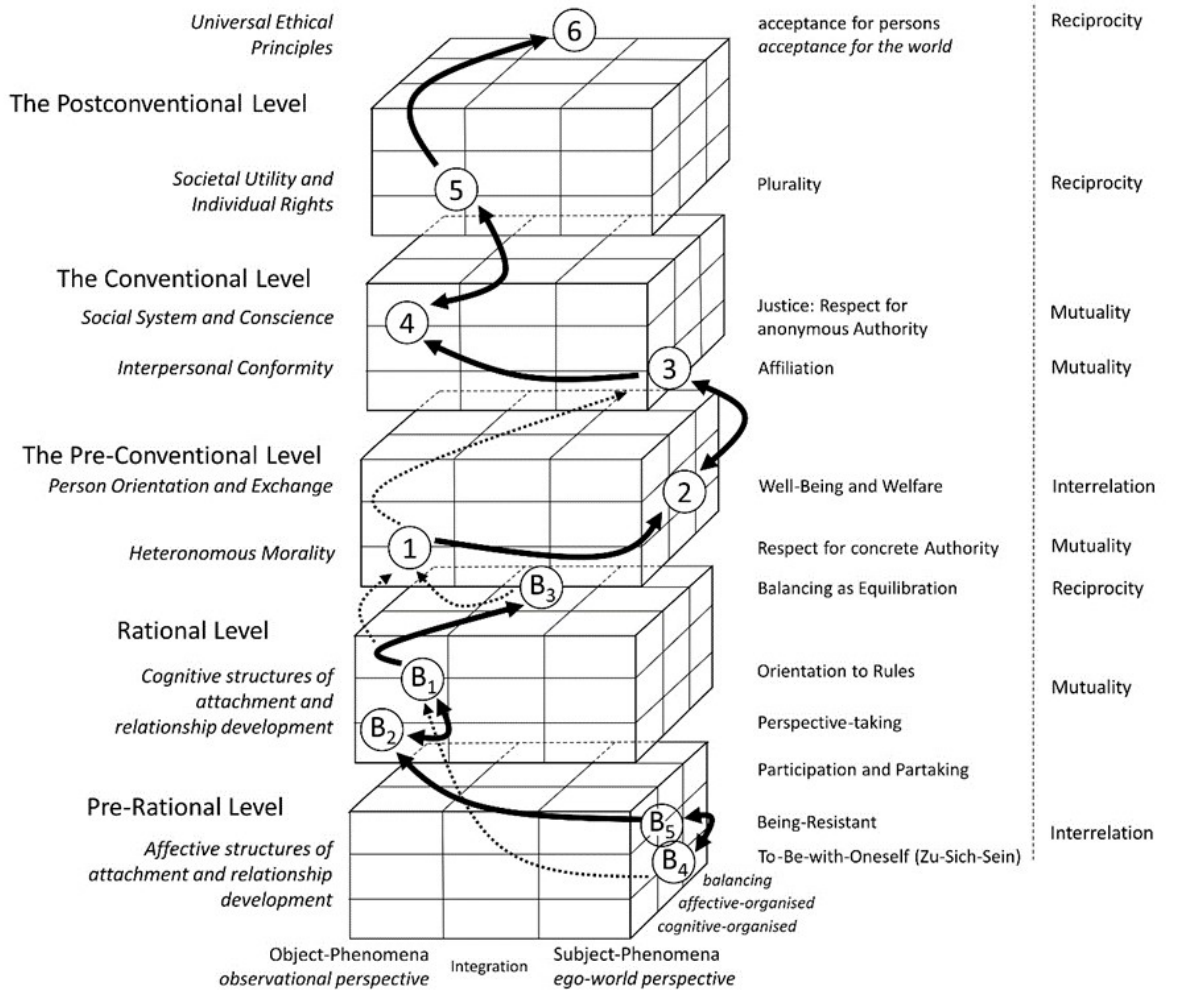


Figure 4. Theory of Judgement and Care through Relatedness

The so-called *progressive* accommodation, according to Piaget [100, 101], allows for the emergence of new and different structures, but from the passive moment as a *dominant* accommodative experience, the sense of helplessness *before* or fusion (*confluence*) with the world can arise (up to distorted *ego-world perspectives*). Only the passive modality fundamentally enables *moments of resonance events* according to Rosa [46] and thus *world transformation* through *confluent moments of resonance* [102]. The *foundation of every morality* [72] therefore develops from the *fundamental feeling of attachment*, through attachment to the world, connectedness with the world, and being embedded in the world. Children are to be understood as *active co-creators* of their own *world-shaping* and *world-building*, according to Prout and James [103], and not merely passive subjects of purely social processes.

Piaget emphatically points out that every *sense of rules* develops from a *relationship* [104]. In relation to the passive modality, Koestler's descriptions provide a deeper understanding, as they show that from the *liquid world* and within the *whirl of sensory perception*, through the act of seeing, hearing, feeling, touching, and grasping the *dynamic currents, islands gradually form and shape as continents* for the child, enabling an increasingly *complex formation of reality as Wirklichkeit* [105]. In this modality, the pure *being-in-the-world*, in the sense of Heidegger [50] and Tugendhat [51], is present, from which practical action emerges and becomes visible in infant/toddler play (being-with-the-world). This mode, with reference to Heidegger [50], opens up *life-care* as a *world-oriented concern* and *care* in general, particularly in contrast to pure *self-care*. This passive being, intertwined with accommodative

experiences and deeply active in experience, intertwines with the *form of rejection* [51] and *differentiation*. Even mild rejection as delimitation creates *reciprocity* as *mutuality* (vis-à-vis or in German: Gegenseitigkeit), shaping being-in-relationship to the world as something *opposite* (environment as the-world-around), allowing affectively organized counteraction as defense (B<sub>5</sub> to C<sub>1</sub>+) and withdrawal as protection or confluence (B<sub>4</sub> to C<sub>2</sub>+).

Through further development of the resistant modality, a *struggle for independence* and *individuality* begins in the second year of life, where the respective *spaces of freedom* open up new and different intellectual explorations and represent both the necessary foundation and the maturity of comprehensive judgment [72, 106]. Even infants, through experiencing *helpful versus harmful acts* [107], begin to develop an initial understanding of morally relevant interactions – especially in relation to *care*. Infants also show a preference for persons who are perceived as supportive and actively helpful from around the age of four months, as opposed to those who express indifference towards the child [108, 109, 110]. Thus, even at a very early stage, infants attempt to derive *meaning* from the world and organize the world according to principles, rules, and criteria. Two-year-olds learn affectively and in relation to *I can, I may, and I decide* about their own experiences, without excessive authoritarian prescriptions *and* (or) without being punished.

Level 0 (as *prerational and rational level*) thus leads, with regard to Kohlberg's theory, to increasingly unfolding and expandable cognitive stages that make an *objectively* observable and the *interobjectifiable* environment understandable from an *observational perspective* (vis-à-vis). The now *rule-oriented* moment (B<sub>1</sub>) emphasizes not only the ability to behave, that is, to direct, guide, produce (as confection), and rule, but also being directed, guided, controlled, and behaving *as one should* (social rules) The emphasis on the rule-oriented moment forms the foundation for Stage 1 and, in particular, for Stage 4 of the development of moral judgment and action. Overemphasis on the rule-oriented aspect theoretically develops into an *avoidant* deviation towards A<sub>1</sub>+, which, in the worst case, can lead to pure persistence (fixation and solidification of rules and norms), dehumanization as devaluation, and instrumental dehumanization through the denial of equivalence and equality [54].

The *cognitive-distanced* moment (B<sub>2</sub>) represents both the ability to recognize (cognitively and intellectually) *from a distance* (through cognition) and the *distanced, objective observer*. Abstract-cognitive thinking opens up objectivity, analytical thinking, and the desire for knowledge, creation, and optimization [8, 9], while also implying a tendency to distance oneself from affective experiences, the world, other people, as well as one's own and others' emotions. The *distanced* moment (B<sub>2</sub>) involves *perspective-taking* and progressively refines it in development, allowing the unfolding of *one's own self: I recognize myself as a self* to which I can attribute qualities, values, etc. All terms related to *self* (as a thought construct), such as self-concept, self-enhancement, self-evaluation, self-efficacy, self-image, self-regulation, self-worth, self-evaluation, and so on (see figure 5).

The *adoption of perspectives* creates and constructs the possibility of *cognitive empathy* (perspective-oriented empathy) as an understanding from a distance (theory of mind) instead of *feeling within oneself*, and *resonating* with closeness, fundamentally promoting objective, strategic exploration. Hence, the distanced moment (B<sub>2</sub>) is a crucial source for Stages 4 and 5 of Kohlberg's theory. However, an overemphasis on this modality leads to an avoidant deviation towards A<sub>2</sub>+, potentially resulting in negative, distancing, and isolating thinking and feeling (isolated self), opening up dehumanization as degradation of others (group egoism), the world, or oneself, leading to a loss of belonging and connectedness [54].

*Reciprocity*, which initially manifests as *interrelation* through the *passive* moment (B<sub>4</sub>) and extends as *mutuality* firstly through the *resistant* moment (B<sub>5</sub>) and after that to the *distanced* moments (B<sub>1</sub>, B<sub>2</sub>), can once again be found in Piaget's *two types of respect* [104] in relation to Kohlberg's *acceptance for persons* [87], where there exists a *unilateral* and a *reciprocal* form. So if the term *reciprocity* is used, it always refers to two aspects: the ability and capacity to perceive and understand mutuality (as vis-à-vis) *and* interrelation (see figure 4). Similarly, this now applies to the word *respect*.

The unilateral form of *respect* [111]), primarily refers to *heteronomy* or the *morality of obedience* [104] and significantly influences (moving away from B<sub>1</sub>) Stage 1 of Kohlberg's theory through the *constraint* of authority. A *morality of autonomy* as *independence* means, according to Piaget [104], *reciprocal responsibility*, which involves *esteem* as a form of respect as *attention, recognition, worth* and the understanding of *to value* [12, 13, 14, 15]. Etymologically, *respect* as a form of *esteem* refers to *regard, notice with especial attention and appreciation*, while *respect* as *to respect the person* implies reverence, honor, awe, and high regard [12, 13, 14, 15]. *Equality* (of *diversity*) and *solidarity* are contrary to obedience [104, 111].

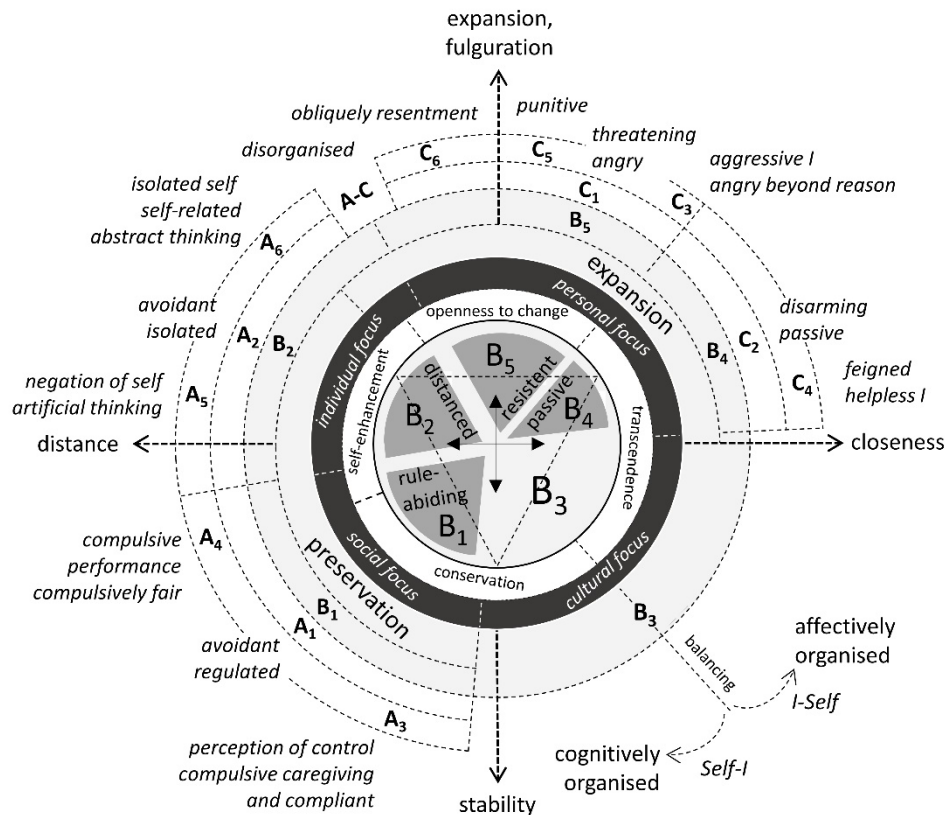


Figure 5. Model of Being-in-the-World

From the perspective of phenomenology, it is crucial to deeply understand the appropriation of concepts (as insertion, inlaying or in German: *Einlegung*) before using them theoretically in explanations as layouting and laying (in German: *Auslegung*), construal as arrangement (in German: *Deutung*), interpretations as a form of expression (in German: *Interpretation*), and analyses. Through this approach, phenomena become clearer and more distinct, enabling the exploration of phenomena such as *care* and *empathy* as processes and developments.

## V. SYNTHESIS FOR A PHENOMENOLOGICAL MAP

In summary, and with regard to the phenomenon of *care*, it is important to note that *care* is closely related to the formation and development of *empathy*. Empathy, on the other hand, relies on developmental processes that appear as *structures of structures* in stages and levels, leading to distinct manifestations and influences on phenomena such as *compassion* (and affect sharing) and prosocial sharing (*participation*) as *affectively* organized structures, as well as *perspective-taking* and *social orientation* as *cognitively* organized structures. Therefore, the question *Are we really measuring empathy?* [112] arises, as long as the process of development is not taken into account and the different manifestations are not considered. Which stage of development and which form of empathy are actually considered, measured, and explored in studies? Are processes of development and change included? Each of these developmental forms can be found as a specific structure at different stages and levels (see figure 4), accompanied by highly distinguishable emotions such as basic emotions (sharing, resonance, and participation), self-conscious emotions (perspective-taking), and social emotions (social orientation) [10, 106]. At this point, every reductive paradigm in the field of research comes to its own limits and its own abilities, that through reduction and atomisation of processes and developments, an overall understanding as a *Gestalt* is lost.

In relation to Piaget [110, 111], interactive and *interrelational* respect as a *reciprocal* form alone shapes the *sense of goodness*, which is particularly important to consider in the phenomenon of *care*. Interactive respect as appreciation, and as recognition and responsiveness, is always accompanied by a *subjective sense of responsibility* oriented towards intentions and aspirations [110, 111], which gradually replaces *the morality of passive obedience*

and an objective sense of responsibility that characterizes early childhood, as demonstrated by the affective orientations of attachment (*I-You-World perspective as ego-world-perspective*) and Phase 0. In the higher stages of moral development as *care development*, particularly at Stage 6, it involves reflexive and active recourse to passive and resistant modalities to create a proactive presence.

External obedience is accompanied by more verbal than actual solidarity, whereas interactive respect forms a *more intimate and lively solidarity* [111]. Solidarity deeply corresponds to the binding phenomenon of the passive modality ( $B_4$ ), which also draws on resistant moments ( $B_5$ ) to demand equality, sharing, and participation (towards  $B_2$ ). In the stages of development, *justice, on the other hand, separates from obedience and is determined solely by equality* [111], with the concept of solidarity making this transformation understandable. It is also important to note that throughout development, the passive ( $B_4$ ) and rule-oriented moments ( $B_1$ ) are deeply interconnected and remain so, which is why every *solidarity* can also become pure *followership* [88]. However, justice aims at *equal freedoms* of autonomous individuals, while solidarity refers to the *well-being of all* independent persons as persons *in an intersubjectively shared way of life* [88]. Therefore, according to Piaget [113], in the *education of global citizens*, no *ready-made intellectual truths* should be predetermined, and the *mind should not be subjected to the authority in the realm of knowledge*.

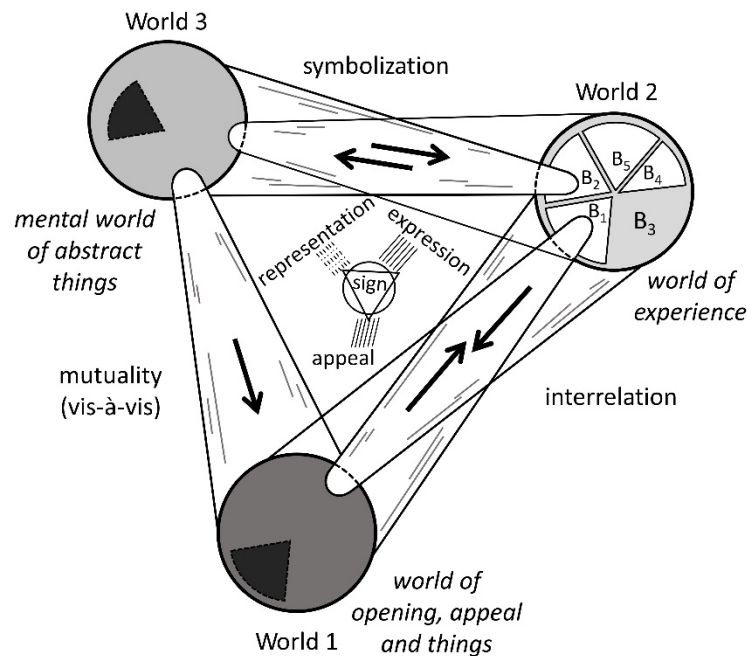


Figure 6. The semiotic world model for the development of attachment

The *vitality* of every individual as person is particularly jeopardized when *truths – even self-evident or mathematical truths – that every individual could discover for themselves, are predetermined from the outside* [113]. Or, as Piaget writes, in *other words, the education of a person is violated when [children and] adolescents receive instruction in civic education, environmental education, and international cooperation, and this instruction takes up all the time in which [children and] adolescents could independently discover this civic education, [through nature experiences], and international cooperation within the framework of spontaneously organized social life. Whenever [conveying, writing, and] speaking actually replaces action, the development of consciousness is hindered* [113]. *Action* is to be found as a moment of *doing in learning as experiencing* in relation to the world (see figure 6).

Therefore, the *first developmental obstacle* to transcend the *world of experience* (World 2; see figure 6) according to Piaget and Inhelder [101] is to move beyond the level of *pure action* (World 2  $\rightleftharpoons$  World 1) and develop the imagination and thus concrete thinking. The *second resistance* is the transition from egocentrism, from which one's own actions can be taken, to a state and process of *decentering* (World 2  $\rightleftharpoons$  World 3), from which the *self* is formed on the foundation of the ego. The *third hurdle* is to understand *objective relationships* (symbolization), that is, to comprehend objects that *are foreign to the self* and engage in *perspective-taking*, thereby experiencing both the physical universe of World 1 and the experiential World 2 *from a distance* (*vis-à-vis*) and initiating an *interindividual and social universe* (World 3  $\rightleftharpoons$  World 1). These obstacles and hurdles are essential for the

development of moral judgment, *care*, and action as only the interrelation and interplay of World 2  $\rightleftharpoons$  World 1, as emphasized by Piaget and Inhelder [101], offer the *possibilities of exchange (prosociality)*, including interpersonal coordination, participation, and the cooperative aspect. These moments comprehensively shape and form the *internal coherence* (towards the sixth stage).

Therefore, Piaget and Inhelder [101] also state: *These considerations show that the cognitive constructions and cognitive decentering, which are necessary for the development of operations [= intellectual, analytical thinking as World 3], cannot be separated from affective and social constructions [= World 2 and World 1] in order to connect action, care, and judgment and judgment, care, and action. All existing schemas of perception and thinking also serve to simultaneously organize the external world of objects and the inner world of values as well as logical and mathematical things; the operative schemas [= intellectual, analytical, and distancing thinking] are known to the subject only through their application to the object, insofar as they are projected into the subject before they can lead to a reflexive understanding [101].*

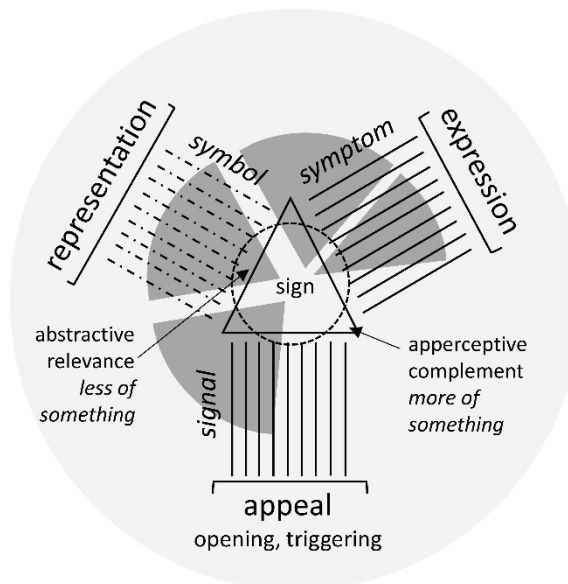


Figure 7. The Organon Model in relation to attachment theory

In the spirit of Bühler [45], signs of a tripartite nature can be found in every narrative, dialogue, discourse, and worldview as soon as experience, desire, and thought are expressed in language. Bühler's theory of the Organon emphasizes that signs have both a static structure and a creative activity in relation to feeling and thinking. Bühler divides signs into the realms of symbols (symbolize), deixis (pointing, iconicity), and an in-between realm of indexing. This model represents the communicative and interactive act of reciprocity and punctuation, where signs function as an Organon, referring to the symbolic process of referencing. Signs are related (more or less) to the three variable aspects of overall meaning.

Bühler's Organon Model [45, 114] reflects a three-world idea (see figure 7, 6 and 5) – which corresponds with Popper's idea of three worlds [115, 116], with a fourth world representing the mixture or balance of the other three (corresponds to B3 of the attachment theory). The organon model, with its three largely independent variable relations, forms a threefold structure: expression (in German: Ausdruck), triggering (opening) or appeal (in German: Auslösung und Appell), and representation (in German: Darstellung und Symbolisierung). However, the original idea stems from Plato's Cratylus [117], where thinking and feeling as language serve as an organum to inform one another about things [114, 118].

According to Bühler [6, 45, 114, 116], the three moments of expression (announcing, symptoms), appeal (triggering, appealing, signals), and representation (describing, symbols) shape the multiplicity, diversity, and multidimensionality of signs, worldviews, and concepts of the being-in-the-world – an all concepts of care (see figure 5).

The circle and triangle in the middle of the Organon model symbolize the three variable factors and the three different modes of a sign (see figure 7). The triangle encloses less than the circle, representing the principle of abstractive relevance. On the other hand, the triangle extends beyond the circle, signifying that what is perceived by the senses always receives an apperceptive complement. Bühler's principle of abstractive relevance suggests that

every sign undergoes a reduction to what is relevant, and the comprehensive understanding cannot be fully conveyed through this reduction alone. Simultaneously, there is always an apperceptive supplementation and complement. The second principle states that all signs are subject to an extension through interpretation, construction, and translation - something is always added. The coexistence of extension and enrichment (apperceptive supplementation) and reduction and emptying (abstract relevance) shapes concrete understanding, which can result in both abundance and lack. From an attachment theory perspective, there can be an abundance or deficiency of sensation or cognition, and expression or representation can be either enhanced or inhibited.

Thus, a semiotic foundation of attachment theory is now established, which can also semiotically explain the phenomena of the development of moral judgments and, in turn, reveal a clear path towards understanding the phenomena of care. At this point in the present article, several theoretical perspectives have been interwoven, forming a foundation for a broad and comprehensive understanding of phenomena and their interactions.

## VI. CONCLUSION: A CONCLUDING SKETCH AS AN OUTLOOK

The article presents an initial sketch to offer a broad and comprehensive theory that unites diverse phenomena and demonstrates their interrelationships through stages, levels, and structures. Essentially, it can be described as *layers*, similar to geological formations, which undergo significant variations in terms of speed, rhythm, and time, while simultaneously moving adjacent and distinct from one another.

The idea of *developmental layers*, characterized by stages, levels, structures, and metaphorically akin to onion rings, serves as a metaphor for a deeper understanding of the phenomenon of *care* and the relationship between *care* and *attachment* (relationship). The theory of attachment and relationship as *being-in-the-world*, proposed by Wiesner and Gebauer, particularly distinguishes between *contact*, *encounter*, *relationship*, and *attachment* (bonding), thereby bringing the phenomena of *care* into clearer focus.

*Contact* differentiates the I from others and enables the stabilization of an *internal-external* distinction. In *contact*, persons still perceive and experience the world through their senses. *Encounter* encompasses *contact*, but not every contact is an encounter. An *encounter* facilitates lively *intersubjectivity* and can be understood as an intense contact with the quality of *resonance* experiences. Encounter involves mutual empathic understanding in the *here and now* [119, 120]. According to Bönsch [121], encounter, as a pedagogical phenomenon, relies particularly on communication and interaction, enabling the realization of *human togetherness*. Where encounter takes place, lively intersubjectivity, a coming together, and a finding of one another become possible.

*Relationship* is a *long-lasting encounter*, as described by Petzold [119, 120, 122], which includes not only shared presence but also a future perspective. Relationship thus emerges from *being-in-relationship* and simultaneously requires a form of continuity that can and should change and develop. *Attachment* is based on a deep quality of relationship as a bond, which can be characterized as both trusting and meaningful, leading to *loyalty*, *devotion*, and *willingness to suffer* [119, 120].

*Confluence*, to complete the totality of modalities, is marked by the phenomenon of fusion, which initially refers to *not being-for-itself* [119, 120] and yet gives rise to selfhood in relation to *attachment theory* and the *passive* moments (B<sub>4</sub>). Through the *resistant* moments in confluence, processes of differentiation can be initiated or differentiation experiences can be retracted or even dissolved. Contact, encounter, relationship, and attachment are essential elements for a comprehensive understanding of the phenomena of *care*. Therefore, self-care as a distancing phenomenon differs from caregiving (welfare) as well as from the social concern for justice (or the social concern that injustice is occurring).

Two essential aspects of care come to the forefront by considering Heidegger [50] and Blumenberg [123], drawing on the *Hyginus fable* by the late ancient Latin author Hyginus: In the fable, Care crosses the river, and above the river, Care sees clay that she molds. Reflecting on her work and creative process, Jupiter arrives, and Care asks him to give spirit to the body formed from clay. Earth also steps forward and demands naming rights for the creature, as she provided the clay as a piece of her own body. Saturn rushes in to settle the dispute between the three parties as to whom this creature belongs. Saturn makes a balanced decision, granting the spirit to Jupiter after death and returning the body to Earth after death. However, as long as it lives, Care receives the creature. The created being is named *homo*, honoring the *humus* from which it is made.

Heidegger [50] sees in the fable that *care* for human beings thus encompasses temporality and being alive, encompassing the future, past, and present. Therefore, *being-in-the-world* is also *being-in-care*. However, in a different interpretation, Blumenberg [123] emphasizes the creation of the likeness by *care*. As a result, Care catches a glimpse of itself in the mirror of the river and finds delight in its own reflection, giving birth to *self-care* (and narcissism). However, this process also initiates the *multiplication* of the created. Consequently, humans are



fashioned in the likeness of Care, yet the act of multiplication generates numerous individuals who are also foreign to one another. Thus, the concern for one's own existence, both on an *individual* and *social* level, emerges from this process. Hence, the same fable, serving as a narrative, encompasses *being-in-care* (in German: Sorge-ums-Ganze, In-Sorge-Sein und Dasein-als-Sorge), *welfare* (in German: Für-Sorge), *self-care* (in German: Selbst-Sorge), and *social-care* (fairness, justice; in German: Sorge-als-Gerechtigkeit) within the framework of *attachment* and *relationship theory*. These aspects highlight different facets of thriving moments *within* relationships.

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