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FROM STRUCTURALISM TO EMOTIONAL THINKING: THE FORMATION OF IDEAS OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE IN THE EARLY 20TH CENTURY

Abstract. This article explores the early 20th-century intellectual developments that laid the conceptual foundations for what would later be termed “emotional intelligence”. It investigates how differing approaches to emotion shaped emerging psychological theory: Edward Titchener’s structuralist psychology emphasised the reduction of feeling to elemental sensations, privileging detached observation over integrative understanding; Sigmund Freud’s psychoanalytic model highlighted the unconscious regulatory role of affect in human thought and behaviour; and Heinrich Maier’s theory of emotional thinking articulated emotion as adaptive cognition, capable of guiding judgment and action. Complementing these perspectives, the work of Carl Jung and Max Scheler advanced the view that feeling functions as a form of evaluative and moral knowledge, providing the philosophical and psychological groundwork for empathy, social awareness, and moral intelligence.

By tracing the interplay of these diverse intellectual currents, the article demonstrates how early psychology gradually reconceived emotion not as a primitive or disruptive force, but as a central component of human cognition and ethical reasoning. The analysis underscores that what later became formalized as emotional intelligence did not emerge suddenly in the late 20th century; rather, it was the culmination of a century-long reorientation in the understanding of mind and affect. This shift reflects a broader transformation in early modern psychology: from the isolated dissection of emotion toward an integrated recognition of its cognitive, moral, and adaptive significance. In doing so, the study situates emotional intelligence within a rich historical and philosophical tradition, highlighting the enduring interplay between theory, practice, and the human quest to understand the emotional dimensions of intelligence.

Keywords: emotional intelligence, structuralism, psychoanalysis, emotional thinking, cognition, emotion, empathy.

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ВІД СТРУКТУРАЛІЗМУ ДО ЕМОЦІЙНОГО МИСЛЕННЯ: СТАНОВЛЕННЯ ІДЕЙ ЕМОЦІЙНОГО ІНТЕЛЕКТУ НА ПОЧАТКУ ХХ СТОЛІТТЯ

Анотація. Ця стаття досліджує інтелектуальні процеси початку ХХ століття, які заклали концептуальні передумови того, що пізніше було названо емоційним інтелектом. Аналіз зосереджено на різних підходах до емоції, що впливали на формування психологічної та філософської думки. Так, структуралізм Едварда Тітченера зводив почуття до елементарних сенсорних компонентів, надаючи перевагу відокремленому спостереженню над інтегративним розумінням. Психоаналітична модель Зигмунда Фрейда підкреслювала регулятивну роль несвідомого у впливі афектів на мислення, мотивацію та поведінку. Теорія емоційного мислення Генріха Масера трактувала емоції як адаптивне мислення, здатне спрямовувати судження та прийняття рішень. Крім того, праці Карла Юнга й Макса Шелера висвітлювали емоційне переживання як форму оцінного та морального знання, закладаючи психологічні й філософські основи для розвитку емпатії, соціальної свідомості та морального інтелекту. Також внесок Анрі Бергсона й інших мислителів підтверджує філософський аспект інтеграції почуттів і розуму.

Еволюція цих інтелектуальних процесів демонструє, що емоційний інтелект не виник раптово в другій половині XX століття, а був результатом столітнього переосмислення ролі емоцій в психології та філософії. Період характеризувався поступовим переходом від ізольованого розчленування емоцій до їх визнання як центрального аспекту когнітивної, моральної й адаптивної функції людини. Стаття позиціонує емоційний інтелект у багатому історичному та філософському інтелектуальному контексті, підкреслюючи стійку взаємодію між теорією, практикою та прагненням людини зрозуміти емоційні аспекти інтелекту. Таким чином, дослідження показує, що сучасне розуміння емоційного інтелекту є результатом глибокого й поступового синтезу психологічних, філософських і соціокультурних ідей, що формувалися протягом раннього XX століття.

Ключові слова: емоційний інтелект, структуралізм, психоаналіз, емоційне мислення, пізнання, емоція, емпатія.

Introduction. In the early decades of the 20th century, the human mind was largely interpreted through the prism of rationality and measurable cognition. The pioneering work of Alfred Binet (1905) and Lewis Terman (1916), who developed the first standardized intelligence tests, defined intellect in quantitative terms: memory, logic, and analytical reasoning became the chief emblems of human potential [2; 12]. Psychology's growing ambition to align itself with the natural sciences encouraged a form of cognitive reductionism, in which subjective and emotional phenomena were treated as imprecise, unmeasurable, and therefore secondary [3].

Within this emerging scientific culture, emotion was recast as an obstacle to rational thought – a vestige of humanity's primitive past. The new psychology sought to purge itself of sentiment, aspiring to the objectivity of physics or physiology. This ideal of detachment found reinforcement in the broader sociocultural environment of the early 20th century: industrialization, bureaucratic organization, and Taylorist efficiency redefined virtue as composure and control [3; 7]. The ideal worker, administrator, or scientist was one who could discipline feeling in the service of rational performance.

In this sense, early modern psychology participated in a broader cultural repression of affect, equating reason with mastery and emotion with weakness. The mind was a machine of calculation; feeling was its noise. Yet, the very success of this mechanistic model created its own void. As the century progressed, thinkers from Freud to Heinrich Maier began to reveal that the boundaries between reason and emotion were porous – that affect was not an enemy of intelligence, but one of its hidden conditions. The later rise of emotional intelligence would thus represent not a rejection of rationality, but a reconciliation of intellect and emotion, restoring to psychology the very dimension it had once excluded. Thus, **the purpose of the article** is to explore how early twentieth-century psychological

and philosophical thought prepared the ground for the modern concept of emotional intelligence.

Presentation of the main material. At the turn of the 20th century, psychology sought to legitimate itself as an empirical science distinct from philosophy and physiology. Edward Bradford Titchener, one of the most influential figures of this period, defined psychology as “the study of the structure of the conscious mind, in terms of its simplest definable components and the manner of their combination” [13]. His approach, known as structuralism, aimed to analyze mental life into its elementary constituents – sensations (the elements of perception), images (the elements of thought), and affective states (the elements of feeling) – and to describe their relations independently of any reference to function or context.

For Titchener, feeling was one of the basic “atoms” of the mind, analyzable along a few dimensions such as “pleasant – unpleasant”, “exciting – calm”, or “tense – relaxed” [13]. Emotions were not fundamental experiences but complex aggregates of sensations and feelings associated with physiological processes and were treated as a secondary phenomenon, not a source of insight or reasoning.

In his “Outline of Psychology”, Titchener wrote that the task of psychology was “to describe the structure of mental experience,” not to ask why or for what emotions arise [13]. He championed introspection, but only in its most purified, detached form – the introspector must observe emotion without being moved by it.

From the standpoint of emotional intelligence, Titchener's psychology represents the antithesis of what emotional intelligence would later stand for. His view had three crucial limitations:

1. Emotion as Noncognitive: Emotion was stripped of its meaning, function, and intentionality – reduced to raw feeling-states, rather than seen as informational or intelligent.

2. Emotion as Private and Isolated: Feelings were seen as purely individual sensations, not as relational

or social signals – precisely the dimensions that emotional intelligence later emphasized.

3. Emotion as Passivity, not Agency: In Titchener's framework, one experiences emotion, but one does not use it. Emotion could not guide thought or shape judgment; it merely accompanied them.

In short, Titchener's introspective psychology purified consciousness of its vitality – producing a disembodied, non-social mind. It was the psychology of the laboratory, not of the living person. Yet this very detachment revealed the limits of structuralism. By reducing emotion to physiological sensation, it disenfranchised the human quality of experience – its value, intentionality, and relational meaning. Subsequent generations of psychologists and philosophers would revolt against this emotional minimalism, seeking to reintegrate feeling into the life of the mind.

Where Titchener analyzed the surface of consciousness, Sigmund Freud explored its emotional depths. In "The Interpretation of Dreams" Freud famously argued that much of mental life is organised around wishes, affects, and symbolic expression; dreams and symptom formations reveal the meanings of underlying affective tensions rather than being mere accidents of neural activity. Freud conceived psychic life as driven by affective impulses that seek symbolic channels for expression. From this perspective, emotions function as motivational and signifying forces – not chaotic eruptions but structured communications within the mind that disclose conflicts, links to past experience, and adaptive aims. This reconceptualisation makes emotion into a kind of internal information (an "intelligent energy") that the subject – and later the analyst – can interpret [4].

In his writings, Freud revealed that emotional life – fear, desire, guilt, love – governs human behaviour far more profoundly than rational will. The psyche, he argued, is an economy of affect: a field of tension between instinctual drives and the regulating forces of the ego and superego [4; 7]. Thus, Freud's insights were radical because they made emotion intelligent in a new way:

- emotions were not random outbursts; they were symbolic communications between conscious and unconscious systems;
- emotional repression produced symptoms, which the psyche crafted as ingenious solutions to inner conflict;
- the therapeutic process itself depended on emotional insight – the patient's ability to recognize, articulate, and integrate feeling.

In this view, emotion was not the enemy of reason but its secret partner – the power that shapes attention, memory, and even moral judgment. Freud's ego was, in many respects, the first modern model of emotional self-regulation – the capacity to recognize inner affective forces and manage them constructively. Thus, psychoanalysis became the first great theory of emotional literacy, decades before the term existed.

Moreover, Freud's technical notion of working-through describes a clinical procedure in which affective material is repeatedly revisited, recognized, and integrated into conscious life. Working-through trains patients to tolerate, name, and reorganize painful affects so that previously disruptive emotional patterns can be transformed into adaptive responses. In other words, psychoanalytic technique cultivates forms of emotional awareness and regulation – competencies that map directly onto core emotional intelligence constructs. Contemporary models of emotional intelligence make those competencies explicit. Mayer and Salovey's ability model defines emotional intelligence as a set of skills: perceiving emotions, using them to facilitate thinking, understanding emotional meanings, and managing emotions in oneself and others – capacities that bear a clear family resemblance to what psychoanalysis sought to develop by helping patients identify, reflect upon, and manage their affects [9].

Daniel Goleman later translated and popularized these psychological competencies into a public framework that emphasizes self-awareness, self-regulation, social skill, empathy, and motivation – concepts that echo Freud's insistence that emotional life is intelligible, educable, and central to adaptive functioning [5]. Goleman's best-selling treatment helped establish emotional intelligence as a field of applied interest to education, management, and therapy.

Finally, recent scholarly work has explicitly explored the conceptual and empirical overlaps between psychoanalytic thinking and emotional intelligence research, showing convergences around themes such as affect regulation, alexithymia, and the neural substrates of emotion processing. These studies argue that psychoanalytic practices (like working-through) and emotional intelligence-oriented interventions both aim to convert diffuse affective energy into conscious, interpretable information that supports better self-management and social attunement [11].

Freud transformed emotion from a nuisance to be controlled into a source of meaning and guidance within the mind; psychoanalytic technique

sought to cultivate the very capacities – awareness, differentiation, and regulation of affect – that modern emotional intelligence theory describes and measures.

While Freud explored emotion's depth, Heinrich Maier explored its form and function. Associated with the Würzburg School of thought psychology, Maier rejected both the structuralist and behaviourist tendencies to isolate cognition from emotion. In his treatise "Psychologie des emotionalen Denkens" ("Psychology of Emotional Thinking"), Maier challenged the prevailing notion that emotion was irrational or purely subjective. Instead, he proposed that emotion itself is a way of thinking – a structured, goal-oriented mode of cognition [8].

For Maier, feelings were not interruptions of thought but organizers of meaning. When a person thinks emotionally, perception, memory, and value converge in a unified experience; emotion shapes what is attended to and how the world is interpreted. Emotional thinking, therefore, is adaptive – it guides understanding, not distorts it [8]. This conception anticipated the later scientific language of emotional intelligence:

- emotions contain informational value; they tell us what matters;
- emotions are context-sensitive judgments, integrating affect with cognition;
- emotions are motivational forces, orienting human action toward significance and coherence.

Where Titchener saw emotion as atomic sensation, Maier saw it as relational meaning – the living bond between mind and world. His "emotional thinking" foreshadowed the holistic integration of feeling and intellect that Goleman and Salovey – Mayer would formalize much later.

The intellectual revaluation of emotion did not stop with H. Maier. Carl Jung identified feeling as one of the four fundamental psychological functions – alongside thinking, sensation, and intuition. For Jung, feeling was not mere affectivity but a form of judgment, capable of evaluating experience through values rather than concepts [6]. Similarly, Max Scheler in "The Nature of Sympathy", treated emotion as a form of knowledge: through sympathy, one apprehends moral and spiritual truths inaccessible to detached intellect. He argued that emotions possess intentional and cognitive content as they disclose values and moral realities that pure intellect cannot grasp. Scheler's notion of emotional knowledge portrayed emotion as an epistemic act – a way of knowing through empathy [10]. In philosophy, Henri Bergson's defence of intuition as a sympathetic understanding of life's flow offered another bridge between emotion

and intelligence. He perceived intuition as a form of emotional knowing – a direct sympathy with life's flow, a participation rather than an analysis [1].

Thus, these scientists gave emotional life philosophical dignity. Each of these thinkers opposed the mechanistic intellectualism of structuralism, asserting that emotional life is cognitive, moral, and existential – that to feel is also to know. Together with Maier's emotional thinking, these theories constituted a radical alternative to the detached rationalism of earlier psychology. Emotion was no longer the irrational residue of mind, but its organ of meaning.

Summing up ideas mentioned above, it should be mentioned that the early 20th century laid every conceptual stone needed for what would, decades later, be called "emotional intelligence" (see Table 1).

Each thinker, in his own way, restored emotion to its rightful place – not beneath intellect but within it.

Conclusions. Therefore, the emergence of emotional intelligence in contemporary psychology represents not a sudden innovation, but the culmination of a century-long intellectual transformation in the understanding of emotion. Early 20th-century psychology, dominated by structuralism and the quest for a "scientific" measure of intellect, initially treated emotion as secondary, disruptive, or even primitive. Thinkers such as Edward Titchener analyzed feelings as isolated sensory components, privileging detached observation over holistic experience. Yet, during this period, other voices – Sigmund Freud, Carl Jung, Heinrich Maier, Max Scheler, and Henri Bergson – began to articulate a more integrated vision of mind and affect, recognizing that emotion shapes thought, behaviour, and moral judgment.

This historical evolution demonstrates that what we now conceptualize as emotional intelligence emerged organically from ongoing debates about cognition, feeling, and their intersection, building on preceding intellectual developments. Freud's insights into unconscious motivation, Maier's notion of emotional thinking as adaptive cognition, Jung's evaluative feeling function, and Scheler's philosophy of sympathy collectively anticipated key emotional intelligence components: self-awareness, self-regulation, social awareness, and empathy. Bergson's reflections on intuition and affective insight further underscore the philosophical foundations of understanding emotion as a form of intelligence, rather than mere sentiment.

Over the course of the early 20th century, psychology gradually shifted from the dissection of emotion toward its recognition as a vital dimension of human intellect. This evolution reflects not only a

Table 1

Early 20th-Century Thinkers and the Roots of Emotional Intelligence

| Thinker | Core idea | Connection to emotional intelligence (EI) |
|---------------------------|--|--|
| Edward Bradford Titchener | Emotion as a basic, analyzable affect reducible to sensations and their intensity | EI later arises in reaction against such reductionism, emphasizing the holistic and functional role of emotions in reasoning and behaviour |
| Sigmund Freud | Emotion as an unconscious regulator of thought and motivation; affect drives psychic energy and conflict | Provides the foundation for concepts of self-awareness and self-regulation central to EI |
| Heinrich Maier | Emotional thinking as adaptive, purposive cognition shaping human judgment | Anticipates the integration of emotion and intelligence later formalized in EI theory |
| Carl Jung | “Feeling” as an evaluative, value-based psychological function equal to thinking | Offers an early model of empathy, interpersonal understanding, and moral intelligence |
| Max Scheler | Sympathy and love as forms of emotional knowledge that disclose moral and spiritual values | Establishes the philosophical groundwork for social awareness, empathy, and relational intelligence |
| Henri Bergson | Intuition as an affective mode of knowing reality beyond analytic intellect; emotion reveals duration and creative evolution | Anticipates EI’s emphasis on holistic insight, emotional attunement, and the non-rational dimensions of understanding |

scientific progression but also a broader ethical and cultural reorientation, in which the ability to perceive, integrate, and respond to emotional life became recognized as essential to personal development, social interaction, and effective leadership. What began as a science of detached measurement evolved into an ethics of empathy and integration, linking cognitive prowess with moral and relational insight.

In sum, the intellectual journey from structuralism to emotional intelligence mirrors the broader

human journey from control to understanding, from reducing emotion to isolated components to embracing its richness as an essential form of intelligence. Recognizing these historical roots enriches our contemporary understanding of emotional intelligence, highlighting that the integration of cognition and emotion is not merely a modern invention but the fruit of a century-long dialogue between philosophy, psychology, and the lived experience of human feeling.

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