

Dmytro BIHUNOV,
PhD (Psychol.), Associate Professor,
Doctoral Candidate
ORCID ID: 0000-0001-6100-7765
Scopus-Author ID: 57222170923
bihunov.d@gmail.com
Hryhorii Skovoroda University in Pereiaslav
Pereiaslav, Ukraine

EMOTION AND THE MIND: FROM EARLY PSYCHOLOGY TO EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

This article explores early 20th-century intellectual developments that prepared the ground for what would later be known as emotional intelligence. Moving beyond the view that emotional intelligence appeared in isolation, the study traces its evolution through thinkers who redefined the relationship between emotion and cognition. The analysis highlights the shift from structuralist reductionism to holistic and affective models of mind in the works of E. Titchener, W. Wundt, S. Freud, and H. Maier. Contributions by C. Jung, H. Bergson, M. Scheler, and W. McDougall further illustrate how philosophical and psychological traditions converged in viewing emotion as a moral and cognitive force. The article argues that emotional intelligence reflects a long transformation in the human sciences – from analyzing emotion as mere reaction to recognizing it as the foundation of self-awareness, empathy, and adaptive reasoning.

Keywords: *emotional intelligence, early 20th-century psychology, structuralism, psychoanalysis, emotional thinking, cognition, empathy.*

Дмитро БІГУНОВ
кандидат психологічних наук,
доцент, докторант
ORCID ID: 0000-0001-6100-7765
Scopus-Author ID: 57222170923
bihunov.d@gmail.com
Університет Григорія Сковороди в Переяславі
м. Переяслав, Україна

ЕМОЦІЯ ТА РОЗУМ: ВІД РАННЬОЇ ПСИХОЛОГІЇ ДО ЕМОЦІЙНОГО ІНТЕЛЕКТУ

У статті розглянуто інтелектуальні процеси початку ХХ ст., які заклали підґрунтя для подальшого формування поняття емоційного інтелекту як важливої складової психологічної науки. Виходячи за межі припущення, що емоційний інтелект виник ізольовано в сучасній психології, простежено його

становлення через ключові ідеї мислителів, які переосмислили взаємозв'язок між емоційним і раціональним у людській свідомості. Особливу увагу приділено переходу від структуралістських редукаціоністських підходів до цілісних і афективних моделей мислення, у межах яких емоція поступово починає усвідомлюватись як необхідний і самостійний складник інтелектуального життя людини та розвитку її особистості.

У роботі проаналізовано зазначене питання в контексті протилежних рамок: інтроспективного структуралізму Едварда Тітченера, теорії відчуттів Вільгельма Вундта, динамічної моделі афективного несвідомого Зигмунда Фрейда та теорії емоційного мислення Генріха Майєра, що передбачала сучасний синтез емоції та мислення. Погляди Карла Юнга, Анрі Бергсона, Макса Шелера і Вільяма МакДугалла ще глибше демонструють, як філософські, феноменологічні та соціально-психологічні традиції збігалися у розумінні емоції як джерела морального, інтуїтивного та соціального пізнання.

Доведено, що емоційний інтелект є результатом тривалого розвитку гуманітарних наук – від трактування емоції як фізіологічного залишку до усвідомлення її ролі як динамічної, когнітивної та етичної сили. Емоція, що колись вважалася ірраціональною і вторинною, постає життєвою основою самосвідомості, емпатії та адаптивного мислення. Отже, у дослідженні переосмислено місце емоційного інтелекту в ширшому філософсько-історичному контексті, показуючи, що його ключові ідеї формувалися задовго до появи самого терміна.

Ключові слова: *емоційний інтелект, психологія початку XX ст., структуралізм, психоаналіз, емоційне мислення, пізнання, емпатія.*

Introduction

The early 20th century – roughly 1900 to 1939 – marked a pivotal transformation in the scientific understanding of the mind. Psychology, which had emerged from philosophy and physiology, was striving for recognition as an empirical discipline. Within this process, emotion – long regarded as irrational, unstable, or secondary to reason – began to find its place as a legitimate object of inquiry. Researchers sought to uncover not only how we feel, but what role those feelings play in perception, judgment, and action. Emotion was not yet celebrated as a form of intelligence, but it was increasingly acknowledged as inseparable from cognition, volition, and personality. Thinkers such as Wilhelm Wundt and William James laid the groundwork by analyzing affective states within physiological and experiential frameworks. Their efforts marked an important shift: emotion was no longer the antithesis of thought but one of its conditions. Across Europe and North America, experimental psychology, psychoanalysis, and phenomenology each, in their own way, contributed to a growing recognition that the life of the mind is not purely intellectual.

Thus, this period stands as a crucial bridge between early psychology and the modern conception of emotional intelligence – a moment when emotion began to be studied not merely as a disturbance of reason, but as a vital element in the architecture of human understanding.

Yet despite the richness of this intellectual moment, its connection to what is now termed «emotional intelligence» has remained largely underexplored. Scholarly attention has often centred on the cognitive revolution of the mid-20th century or on the formal emergence of emotional intelligence in the late 20th century, leaving the earlier formative decades comparatively neglected.

By revisiting the period between the turn of the century and the 1930s, this study seeks to illuminate how early psychological theories laid the conceptual groundwork for emotional intelligence – transforming emotion from a disruptive force into a cognitive, moral, and adaptive element of the human mind. In doing so, it repositions early psychology as an essential chapter in the genealogy of emotional intelligence, revealing continuities where modern accounts often see rupture.

Thus, *the aim of the article* is to trace how early 20th-century psychological and philosophical developments redefined the relationship between emotion and cognition, thereby laying the groundwork for the modern concept of emotional intelligence.

Methods and Materials

At the turn of the 20th century, psychology was striving to establish itself as a natural science, separating from philosophy and theology. Its early ambition, shaped by figures like Wilhelm Wundt and Edward Titchener, was to study the mind through objective introspection and later behaviourist observation. Intellect was privileged as the seat of human superiority – measurable, rational, and controllable. Emotion, conversely, was treated as a residue of instinct, a relic of evolution, or an impediment to clear thinking.

So, Wundt did not ignore emotion; rather, he sought to systematize it within the emerging scientific framework of psychology. In his «Grundzüge der physiologischen Psychologie» («Principles of Physiological Psychology»), he proposed that emotional experience could be analyzed through three fundamental dimensions – pleasure versus displeasure, excitement versus depression, and tension versus relaxation (Wundt, 2016). These categories reflected Wundt's ambition to bring emotions under experimental control, aligning them with measurable physiological processes. Yet in this analytical treatment, feeling became depersonalized – an object of laboratory description rather than a phenomenon embedded in meaning, value, or relation. Emotion, for Wundt, was an immediate experience rather than a form of understanding. The moral, social, and interpersonal resonances of feeling – those later recognized as central to emotional intelligence – remained beyond his methodological reach.

At the same time, William James, writing contemporaneously, took a strikingly different route in «The Principles of Psychology». For James, emotion was not a mere mental state but a bodily event, a consequence of physiological change: «*We do not run because we are afraid; rather, we are afraid because we run*» (James, 1983). This James – Lange theory of emotion affected a concrete, empirical grounding and challenged the dualism of mind and body that had long dominated Western psychology. Yet, even here, emotion was understood as reactive – a somatic echo of external events rather than a component of thought or judgment, i.e., the body

responded, the mind observed (James, Lange, 1967). This scientific detachment, however, would soon face resistance. A growing number of thinkers began to see emotion not as the antithesis of intellect but as its complement and foundation – a force that shapes meaning, values, and action. While James's insight into the embodiment of emotion anticipated modern affective neuroscience, it still fell short of conceiving emotion as a form of cognition or intelligence – a step that thinkers like Heinrich Maier and later the founders of emotional intelligence would begin to take.

In turn, Edward Bradford Titchener defined psychology as the study of the structure of consciousness. His programme, structuralism, aimed to break down mental experience into its simplest elements – sensations, images, and feelings – and to describe their relations through introspective observation (Titchener, 2006).

In «Outline of Psychology» and «Experimental Psychology», Titchener described feelings as elemental affective states measurable along simple dimensions such as pleasant–unpleasant, exciting–calm, or strain–relaxation. Emotions, for him, were secondary, complex formations – a combination of sensations and feelings that accompany physiological changes (Titchener, 2006; Titchener, 2015). Crucially, structuralism treated emotion as non-cognitive: a residue of mental life rather than an organizing principle of thought. Titchener's reliance on introspective observation demanded that the subject examine emotional states without affective involvement. The introspector was to remain detached and analytical, observing the contours of feeling as a scientist might observe a specimen (Leary, 1994). In this respect, Titchener's psychology mirrored the intellectual ethos of early industrial modernity – precise, mechanistic, and emotionally restrained.

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.

Results

The early 20th century's greatest turning point for the understanding of emotion came from Sigmund Freud. Though Freud did not speak of «emotional intelligence,» his psychoanalytic theory redefined emotion as the governing force of psychic life.

Thus, the following Freud's key contributions should be noted:

Emotion as Energetic Principle: Freud's notion of instinct (or drive) described emotion not as noise but as the energy of the psyche – the vital current moving beneath thought (Freud, 2001, 18,19).

The Unconscious Mind: He unveiled that much of human thought and decision-making is emotionally determined, unconscious yet intelligent in its symbolic logic (Freud, 2001,19; Freud, 2010).

Affective Reasoning: In dream-work and symptom formation, Freud showed that emotions could «think» – they reorganize reality to serve psychic balance (Freud, 2010).

Ego Development and Regulation: In «The Ego and the Id», Freud depicted the ego as a regulator of inner affective forces, anticipating what modern psychology now calls self-awareness and emotional regulation – two of the central components of emotional intelligence (Freud, 2001, 19).

Although Freud's model was couched in pathology and conflict, it revealed that emotion is not opposed to intellect – rather, it is the invisible architect of thought, will, and personality. Thus, one can trace the roots of emotional intelligence in Freud's idea that emotional life must be recognized, interpreted, and integrated for mental health and rational conduct.

Another remarkable, though often overlooked, figure is Heinrich Maier – German philosopher, known for his work «Psychologie des emotionalen Denkens» («Psychology of Emotional Thinking»), in which he explored «emotional thinking» as distinct from purely logical thought, especially in aesthetic, moral, religious domains.

Maier's contribution is a bridge between cognition and affect, anticipating later ideas of emotional intelligence. He proposed that emotions are not mere reactions but modes of cognition – they shape perception, colour judgment, and influence meaning. Emotional thinking, in his view, was goal-directed and adaptive – capable of organizing experience and guiding intelligent behaviour. He argued that the logic of feeling coexists with the logic of reason – each operating with different but equally valid criteria of truth (Maier, 2018). In essence, Maier's emotional thinking is a precursor to the idea that emotion and cognition are interdependent – that emotion contains its own form of intelligence, capable of reasoning through value, empathy, and intuition.

Thus, where Freud revealed the depth of emotional life, Maier described its form – a cognitive structure imbued with affect. Both, in their own ways, dismantled the 19th-century hierarchy that placed intellect above feeling.

Alongside Freud and Maier, several early thinkers contributed to a new vision of emotion. Among them, from our point of view, Carl Jung, Henri Bergson, Max Scheler and William McDougall should be mentioned. Carl Jung, a former adherent of Freud's school, advanced a broader psychological model in which emotion – expressed through the feeling function – was not mere sentiment or impulse but a faculty of valuation. In his «Psychological Types», Jung classified feeling as one of the four fundamental modes of consciousness – together with thinking, sensation, and intuition. Unlike Freud's emphasis on unconscious drives, Jung's conception of feeling implied a rational dimension: emotion as an instrument of discernment, allowing the individual to evaluate meaning, moral worth, and relational harmony (Jung, 1976). This vision of emotion as a guiding mode of understanding anticipates the self-awareness and empathy central to modern theories of emotional intelligence.

Meanwhile Henri Bergson, in philosophy, articulated a parallel insight. His notion of intuition, developed in works such as «Creative Evolution», described an emotionally charged form of understanding – a direct, sympathetic apprehension of life's flow rather than detached rational analysis. For Bergson, intuition joined intellect and emotion in a higher synthesis, suggesting that authentic knowledge arises from an

empathetic participation in experience (Bergson, 1998). This view resonates strongly with the affective intuition and empathy emphasized in emotional intelligence theory.

In turn, Max Scheler, working within phenomenology, further developed the idea of emotion as cognitive insight. In «The Nature of Sympathy», he proposed that emotions disclose moral and spiritual truths inaccessible to abstract reason. Love, sorrow, and compassion were not mere affective states but acts of intentional awareness, revealing values and ethical realities (Scheler, 2008). Scheler thus laid the groundwork for later conceptions of emotional and moral intelligence, where feeling functions as a mode of value perception and interpersonal understanding.

Finally, William McDougall, in «An Introduction to Social Psychology», presented emotion as a dynamic force organizing motivation and social behaviour. He interpreted emotions as instinctive yet intelligent responses that enable cooperation, moral conduct, and social cohesion (McDougall, 2003). In this sense, McDougall prefigured the modern understanding of emotion as motivational intelligence – a vital energy that underlies purpose, perseverance, and moral agency.

Taken together, these early thinkers collectively transformed the image of emotion: from a disruptive residue of instinct into a complex system of valuation, understanding, and adaptation. Their insights foreshadowed the central tenets of emotional intelligence – self-awareness, empathy, motivation, and moral discernment – long before the term itself was coined. It is also necessary to mention that the early 20th century was also an age of emotional upheaval. Rapid industrialization, urban alienation, and the mechanization of life created what many intellectuals perceived as a crisis of feeling. At the same time literature, art, and psychoanalysis all responded to this. For example, expressionism sought to give visible form to the emotional essence of experience. Meanwhile psychoanalysis became both therapy and cultural critique, i.e., a rebellion against emotional repression. In the meantime, the emerging human sciences (psychology, sociology, anthropology) began to question the «rational man» of Enlightenment thought.

Thus, the study of emotion was not only theoretical; it was existential. The modern world demanded new emotional literacies to navigate its anxieties, contradictions, and moral complexities – a demand that would, many decades later, find its name in emotional intelligence.

Therefore, in the early 20th century, the foundations of emotional intelligence were being built – quietly, indirectly, but unmistakably (Table 1):

Table 1

Early 20th-Century Thinkers and Their Contributions to Emotional Intelligence

Thinker	Approach / School	Contribution	Tie to Emotional Intelligence
Wilhelm Wundt	Experimental / Structuralism	Classified feelings along dimensions; studied emotion experimentally	Foundation for self-awareness and analytical understanding of emotion
William James	Functionalism / Physiological	James–Lange theory: emotion arises from	Early insight into embodied emotion,

Thinker	Approach / School	Contribution	Tie to Emotional Intelligence
	Psychology	perception of bodily change	precursor to emotional self-awareness
Edward Titchener	Structuralism	Structuralist analysis of feelings; dissected conscious experience	Highlighted limits of reductionism, motivating later integration of cognition and emotion
Sigmund Freud	Psychoanalysis	Emotion as unconscious, regulatory force	Self-awareness and emotional regulation
Heinrich Maier	Emotional Psychology	Emotional thinking as adaptive cognition	Cognitive-emotional integration
Carl Jung	Analytical Psychology / Typology	Feeling as evaluative function; typology	Empathy and moral intelligence
Henri Bergson	Philosophy / Intuitionism	Intuitive sympathy as understanding; emotion as participatory insight	Emotional insight beyond logic, affective intuition
Max Scheler	Phenomenology / Philosophy of Values	Emotional intuition reveals moral and spiritual values	Moral and social attunement
William McDougall	Social Psychology / Instinct Theory	Emotion as motivational force behind social and moral behaviour	Motivational intelligence and moral engagement

In such a way, the intellectual lineage of emotional intelligence can be traced back to this period – to the recognition that emotional life must be understood, integrated, and managed for mental health, moral judgment, and rational conduct. Where early psychology sought to separate mind from feeling, the later development of emotional intelligence rejoined them, affirming that to think well is also to feel wisely.

Conclusion

The study reveals that emotional intelligence did not arise as a sudden innovation of late 20th-century psychology but rather as the culmination of a profound historical transformation in how emotion was understood. From the analytical detachment of early experimental psychology to the moral and cognitive rehabilitation of feeling in phenomenology and psychoanalysis, the first decades of the 20th century witnessed the gradual rehumanization of mind.

Wundt's and Titchener's structural analyses of affect provided the first systematic frameworks for studying emotion, even as they reduced it to atomistic sensation. Freud redefined emotion as psychic energy – a regulatory and dynamic force that shaped thought and behaviour beneath conscious awareness. Maier offered one of

the earliest integrations of emotion and cognition, while Jung, Bergson, Scheler, and McDougall extended the emotional domain to moral judgment, intuition, and social motivation.

Collectively, these thinkers demonstrated that emotion is not an obstacle to intelligence but its living foundation. The intellectual journey from structuralism to emotional thinking marks a decisive shift – from viewing feeling as irrational residue to recognising it as an essential mode of understanding, adaptation, and value.

Thus, the emergence of emotional intelligence in contemporary psychology can be seen as the maturation of an idea with deep historical roots: the conviction that true intelligence is not only rational but affective, moral, and relational. Emotion and intellect, once divided, were already being reconciled in the intellectual climate of the early 20th century.

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Отримано редакцією / Received: 04.09.25

Прорецензовано / Revised: 19.09.25

Схвалено до друку / Accepted: 25.09.25