

The Emergence of Emotional Intelligence: From Rational Cognition to the Emotional Mind

Виникнення емоційного інтелекту: від раціонального пізнання до емоційного розуму

Bihunov Dmytro

Ph.D. in Psychology, Assistant Professor, Doctoral Student,
Hryhorii Skovoroda University in Pereiaslav,
Pereiaslav (Ukraine)

ORCID ID: 0000-0001-6100-7765
Researcher ID: AAU-9830-2020
Scopus-Author ID: 57222170923
E-mail: bihunov.d@gmail.com

Бігунов Дмитро

Кандидат психологічних наук, доцент, докторант,
Університет Григорія Сковороди в Переяславі,
м. Переяслав (Україна)

ABSTRACT

The aim of the article is to explore the evolution of emotional intelligence as a psychological construct, analyzing how it emerged from multiple traditions – including cognitive science, affective neuroscience, and humanistic psychology – to become a central framework for understanding emotion and reason as interdependent forms of intelligence.

Methods of the research. This article employs a theoretical and historical research design based on an extensive review of psychological and neuroscientific literature. A qualitative content analysis of primary sources was conducted to identify conceptual patterns and trace the evolution of emotional intelligence theory. Comparative and historical-analytical methods were used to examine

Address for correspondence, e-mail: kpnu_lab_ps@ukr.net

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the convergence of cognitive, affective, and humanistic paradigms. Through interpretive synthesis, the article integrates these diverse contributions into a coherent understanding of emotional intelligence as both a scientific construct and a philosophical insight into human nature.

The results of the research. This article explores the emergence of emotional intelligence as a synthesis of cognition and emotion in late twentieth-century psychology. Tracing its development from Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences to Salovey and Mayer's formal model, and its expansion by Bar-On, Steiner, and Goleman, the study highlights how emotional intelligence redefined the meaning of intellect.

The necessity of this article lies in clarifying the theoretical foundations of emotional intelligence, which are often simplified in popular discourse. By revisiting its origins across cognitive science, affective neuroscience, and humanistic psychology, this study reaffirms that emotion and reason are interdependent processes.

Conclusions. The emergence of emotional intelligence marks a major shift in modern psychology, uniting cognition and emotion into a single framework of human understanding. From Gardner to Goleman, this concept redefined intelligence as the harmony of reason and empathy rather than their opposition. Restoring emotion to its rightful place at the centre of consciousness, emotional intelligence continues to bridge the analytic and the humane, affirming that true wisdom arises from the union of mind and heart.

Key words: emotional intelligence, cognition, affect, empathy, multiple intelligences.

Introduction

By the 1980s, psychology had entered a new era of synthesis. The once rigid boundaries separating cognition, emotion, and social behaviour were beginning to dissolve, giving rise to a more integrated understanding of the human mind. The cognitive revolution of the mid-twentieth century had established the mind as an information processor – a mechanism of logic and computation. Since this model matured, it began to reveal its own limitations. Emotion, long treated as a disruptive residue of irrationality, proved impossible to exclude from the study of thought, motivation, and decision-making. Psychologists came to recognize that the human being is not a cold processor of in-

formation but a living system in which affect and reason were intertwined. Within this intellectual transformation, the concept of emotional intelligence emerged, uniting insights from cognitive science, neuroscience, and humanistic psychology into a new vision of human capability.

The necessity of this article arises from the continuing fragmentation of psychological discourse surrounding the nature and measurement of emotional intelligence. Despite the widespread acceptance of the concept in both popular and applied psychology, its theoretical foundations are often simplified or misrepresented, obscuring the richness of its intellectual origins. By revisiting the conceptual evolution of emotional intelligence, this study seeks to restore historical depth and theoretical clarity to the field.

Understanding the emergence of emotional intelligence is not merely a matter of tracing ideas, but of addressing a broader scientific and human concern: how emotion and cognition combine in shaping self-awareness, empathy, and ethical conduct (Mayer et al., 1999). In an age where technical expertise frequently overshadows emotional literacy, revisiting the roots of emotional intelligence serves both academic and social purposes – reinforcing that the cultivation of emotional understanding is essential to education, leadership, and psychological well-being.

Accordingly, this article contributes to psychological scholarship by offering a coherent synthesis of the field's key theorists and by reaffirming the philosophical insight that authentic intelligence includes the capacity to feel wisely, act empathetically, and reason humanely. Thus, **the aim of the article** is to explore the evolution of emotional intelligence as a psychological construct, analyzing how it emerged from multiple traditions – including cognitive science, affective neuroscience, and humanistic psychology – to become a central framework for understanding emotion and reason as interdependent forms of intelligence.

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Methods of the research

This article employs a theoretical and historical research design based on an extensive review of psychological and neuroscientific literature. A qualitative content analysis of primary sources – including works by Gardner (1983), Salovey and Mayer (1990), Goleman (1995), Bar-On (1997), and others – was conducted to identify conceptual patterns and trace the evolution of emotional intelligence theory. Comparative and historical-analytical methods were used to examine the convergence of cognitive, affective, and humanistic paradigms. Through interpretive synthesis, the article integrates these diverse contributions into a coherent understanding of emotional intelligence as both a scientific construct and a philosophical insight into human nature.

Results and their discussion

The groundwork for emotional intelligence was laid by Howard Gardner, whose landmark work “Frames of Mind” (1983) challenged the long-standing assumption, that intelligence could be captured by a single, quantifiable metric such as IQ (Gardner, 1983). Drawing from developmental psychology, neuropsychology, and anthropology, Gardner proposed his theory of multiple intelligences, redefining intellect as a constellation of distinct yet interrelated capacities. He observed, *“The single most important contribution of the theory of multiple intelligences may be the fact that it challenges the notion of a single intelligence”* (Gardner, 1993: 8). His framework recognized linguistic, logical-mathematical, musical, spatial, bodily-kinaesthetic, interpersonal, intrapersonal, and later naturalistic intelligences as discrete modes of human knowing.

Among these, intrapersonal intelligence – the capacity for self-knowledge, emotional insight, and reflective awareness and interpersonal intelligence – the ability to perceive and respond effectively to the emotions, motives, and needs of others – directly anticipated the emotional and social dimensions of intelligence. Gardner’s insight was radical: he reframed emotional

and relational sensitivity as legitimate forms of cognition rather than as mere personality traits or emotional temperaments. In doing so, he bridged the gulf between the intellect of the mind and the wisdom of the heart, suggesting that understanding the self and others is as much an act of intelligence as solving equations or writing prose.

Gardner's pluralistic model emerged during a time when psychology was rediscovering its humanistic roots. Scholars such as Abraham Maslow and Carl Rogers had already emphasized empathy, authenticity, and self-actualization as fundamental to psychological health. For instance, Rogers anticipated the emotional intelligence paradigm in his insight that "*when I accept myself just as I am, then I can change*" (Rogers, 1995: 17), i.e. self-awareness as the foundation for growth; Maslow's vision of self-actualization that "*what a man can be, he must be*" (Maslow, 1998: 91) anticipated emotional intelligence's emphasis on emotional growth and fulfilment as integral to human potential. Thus, their ideas seeded a cultural shift: intelligence was no longer seen as the narrow mastery of symbols but as the broader art of living wisely and well. In turn, Gardner provided the theoretical scaffolding for this intuition, setting the stage for a new conception of emotional knowledge as a cognitive strength.

The term "emotional intelligence" first entered the academic lexicon through the work of Peter Salovey and John D. Mayer, who in 1990 published their seminal paper "Emotional Intelligence in Imagination, Cognition and Personality". They defined emotional intelligence as "*the ability to monitor one's own and others' feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them, and to use this information to guide one's thinking and actions*" (Salovey & Mayer, 1990: 189). This definition marked a decisive conceptual turn. Emotion was no longer the antithesis of reason, but a form of information – data about the self, others, and the world that could be processed intelligently.

Salovey and Mayer's four-branch model delineated emotional intelligence into four abilities: (1) perceiving emotions, (2) using

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emotions to facilitate thought, (3) understanding emotions, and (4) managing emotions. Their model fused the empirical rigor of cognitive psychology with the emerging insights of affective science. Where behaviourism had dismissed inner experience as unobservable, Salovey and Mayer restored emotion to scientific legitimacy by treating it as an adaptive cognitive process. Emotion, they argued, provides the mind with guidance for reasoning, ethical judgment, and motivation – a bridge between instinct and intellect. As the scientists later reflected, “*emotion makes thinking more intelligent, and intelligence makes thinking more emotional*” (Salovey, & Mayer, 1997: 10) capturing their conviction that affect and cognition are mutually enriching rather than opposed.

Their framework reflected a broader paradigm shift in psychology and neuroscience. The rise of affective neuroscience, led by figures such as Jaak Panksepp (Panksepp, 2004) and Joseph LeDoux, revealed that emotions are not primitive relics but sophisticated biological systems central to survival and learning: “*Emotions are the result of evolution; they are hardwired into the brain's neural architecture*” (LeDoux, 1996: 23). LeDoux's research on the amygdala and fear processing demonstrated that emotional responses are deeply embedded in neural circuitry, shaping memory, attention, and behaviour. The scientist proved that “*the emotional brain responds to an event more quickly than the thinking brain*” (LeDoux, 1996: 19), underscoring that emotion guides attention and perception before conscious thought intervenes. This science lent biological credibility to what Salovey and Mayer proposed theoretically that intelligence must encompass emotional awareness and regulation.

Although the Salovey-Mayer model established the theoretical foundation, it was Daniel Goleman who brought emotional intelligence into global consciousness. In 1995, his book “Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More Than IQ” became an international bestseller, reshaping popular and professional understandings of human ability. Goleman's synthesis translated the academic model into a language accessible to educators,

executives, and policymakers, emphasizing its implications for leadership, empathy, resilience, and moral behaviour. He famously wrote, "*In a very real sense we have two minds, one that thinks and one that feels,*" (Goleman, 1995: 8) summarizing the dual nature of human intelligence that emotional intelligence seeks to harmonize.

Goleman expanded emotional intelligence into five key components: self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills. He argued that these capacities are better predictors of life success than traditional measures of cognitive intelligence. His thesis resonated powerfully in a culture increasingly disillusioned with the reduction of human worth to test scores and credentials. Through case studies, workplace research, and insights from neuroscience, Goleman demonstrated that emotional intelligence underlies effective communication, ethical decision-making, and organizational performance.

In later works, such as "Working with Emotional Intelligence" (1998) and "Primal Leadership" (2002), Goleman extended emotional intelligence into the corporate and educational domains, proposing that emotionally intelligent leadership fosters "resonance" – the capacity to attune to and uplift the emotional states of others. He indicated that "*The rules for work are changing. We're being judged by a new yardstick: not just by how smart we are, or by our training and expertise, but also by how well we handle ourselves and others.*" (Goleman, 1998: 3) His influence spread across disciplines, inspiring the integration of emotional learning into school curricula, management training, and public administration worldwide. Though critics accused Goleman of overextending the construct, his popularization gave emotional intelligence a cultural and institutional foothold that pure academia could not have achieved alone.

While Goleman's synthesis reached a global audience, other scholars were advancing the scientific and ethical dimensions of emotional intelligence. Reuven Bar-On, an Israeli psychologist, proposed the model of Emotional-Social Intelligence (ESI),

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emphasizing a broad set of interrelated emotional and interpersonal competencies essential for effective functioning. He defined emotional-social intelligence as “*an array of non-cognitive capabilities, competencies, and skills that influence one's ability to succeed in coping with environmental demands and pressures*” (Bar-On, 1997: 14), i.e. it determines how effectively we navigate both inner and social worlds. His “Emotional Quotient Inventory (EQ-i)” became one of the first standardized tools for measuring emotional intelligence. Unlike ability-based models, Bar-On’s framework included adaptability, stress management, and general mood, situating emotional intelligence within the larger ecology of personality and well-being.

Bar-On’s contribution was crucial, he demonstrated that emotional intelligence could be assessed empirically and applied in clinical, organizational, and educational settings. His work reflected an evolution from the purely cognitive approach of Salovey and Mayer toward a competency-based model – one that recognized emotional intelligence as both an ability and a set of behavioural dispositions that develop over time.

Simultaneously, Claude M. Steiner, a student of Eric Berne and a central figure in Transactional Analysis, advanced a more humanistic and ethical vision of emotional intelligence. In “Achieving Emotional Literacy” (1997), Steiner argued that the cultivation of empathy, honesty, and compassion constitutes a moral education of feeling. He coined the term “emotional literacy” to describe the capacity to recognize, understand, and express emotions responsibly. For Steiner, “*Emotional literacy means being smart with feelings – understanding, respecting, and expressing feelings in a healthy way*” (Steiner, 1997: 12). Where Bar-On focused on measurement, Steiner focused on meaning, on the ethical use of emotional knowledge to foster justice, equality, and love. He wrote that “*the most basic of all human needs is the need to understand and be understood*” (Steiner, 1997: 9). His work reminded the field that emotional intelligence is not merely a tool for success but a foundation for humane living.

Together, Bar-On and Steiner expanded the emotional intelligence discourse beyond cognition and performance into the realms of ethics, community, and character. Their influence helped anchor emotional intelligence in the deeper moral and social dimensions of human life.

The scientific legitimacy of emotional intelligence was further strengthened by advances in neuroscience that revealed the inseparability of emotion and cognition. Antonio Damasio's groundbreaking "Descartes' Error" (1994) challenged the Cartesian notion that reason and emotion operate in separate domains. Through studies of patients with damage to the ventromedial prefrontal cortex, Damasio showed that while their IQs remained intact, their decision-making abilities were severely impaired due to emotional disconnection. From this evidence, he formulated the somatic marker hypothesis – the idea that emotions provide physiological "markers" that guide rational choice. Far from clouding reason, emotion serves as its compass (Damasio, 1994).

Similarly, Joseph LeDoux's research into the neural pathways of fear demonstrated how the amygdala mediates emotional learning, influencing memory and perception (LeDoux, 1996). These discoveries reinforced the central claim of emotional intelligence theory: that emotion and intellect are biologically integrated systems, each shaping the other's function. Emotion, once dismissed as irrational impulse, emerged as the neurological substrate of wisdom.

Later research by Richard Davidson at the University of Wisconsin–Madison further deepened this understanding. His studies on affective style and the neural correlates of compassion revealed that practices cultivating emotional regulation, such as mindfulness and empathy training, can alter brain function and structure (Davidson, & Begley, 2012). Emotional intelligence, therefore, is not merely psychological; it is neuroplastic, capable of being developed and refined throughout life.

The recognition of emotional intelligence has transformed multiple fields of human endeavour. In education, the develop-

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ment of Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) programmes, pioneered by scholars such as Roger Weissberg, James Comer, and Linda Lantieri, has integrated emotional intelligence into curricula worldwide (Weissberg et al., 2015; Comer, 2004; Lantieri, 2008). These programmes teach self-awareness, empathy, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making as essential complements to academic learning. Research shows that SEL enhances not only emotional well-being but also academic achievement, social cohesion, and civic engagement.

Beyond specific interventions, the broader incorporation of emotional intelligence into educational philosophy reflects a shift toward holistic pedagogy. Educators increasingly recognize that cognitive development cannot be separated from emotional growth, and that learning environments grounded in empathy and emotional literacy foster deeper motivation, resilience, and creativity (Brackett et al., 2011; Jennings & Greenberg, 2009; MacCann et al., 2020; MacCann & Fogarty, 2011; Sánchez-Álvarez et al., 2020; Zhou et al., 2024). Thus, emotional intelligence serves not merely as a pedagogical tool but as a foundational principle of human development, shaping students not only as thinkers but as compassionate, socially responsible individuals.

In the workplace, emotional intelligence has redefined the qualities of effective leadership. Studies by Richard Boyatzis, Vanessa Druskat, and others demonstrate that emotionally intelligent leaders foster trust, collaboration, and creativity (Boyatzis, 2009; Coronado-Maldonado et al., 2023; Druskat, & Wolff, 2001). Companies that prioritize emotional intelligence-based leadership development report higher employee engagement and lower turnover (Doğru, 2022; Miao et al., 2017; O'Boyle et al., 2011; Schlaerth et al., 2013). Emotional intelligence has thus become a cornerstone of organizational psychology, emphasizing the human dimension of productivity.

In mental health and counselling, emotional intelligence approaches that emphasize awareness, regulation, and empathy

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(Boyatzis, 2018; Harms & Credé, 2010; Martins et al., 2010; Schlegel et al., 2014; Van Rooy & Viswesvaran, 2004). Techniques drawn from cognitive-behavioural therapy, dialectical behaviour therapy, and mindfulness all reflect the principles of emotional competence. Moreover, the growing recognition of emotional intelligence in healthcare, diplomacy, and even artificial intelligence research underscores its universality: wherever humans interact, emotional intelligence governs the quality of connection.

Despite its widespread adoption, emotional intelligence remains a subject of scientific debate. Critics such as John Locke and Gerald Matthews have argued that emotional intelligence overlaps significantly with established constructs like personality or general intelligence, raising questions about its distinctiveness (Locke, 2005; Matthews et al., 2002). Others have pointed out the proliferation of competing models – ability-based, mixed, and trait-based – which complicate measurement and theory. Stephen Fineman further cautioned that the popular enthusiasm surrounding emotional intelligence risked simplifying complex emotional and social dynamics into managerial or commercial tools, emphasizing the need for conceptual precision and contextual awareness (Fineman, 2004). Empirical research continues to validate the predictive power of emotional intelligence in domains ranging from leadership effectiveness to mental health outcomes. Meta-analytic findings, such as those by Dana L. Joseph and Daniel A. Newman, have demonstrated that emotional intelligence contributes uniquely to job performance through cascading processes of emotional perception, understanding, and regulation, thereby reinforcing its relevance within contemporary psychology (Doğru, 2022; Harms, & Credé, 2010; Joseph, & Newman, 2010; Miao et al., 2017; O'Boyle et al., 2011; Schlaerth et al., 2013; Van Rooy, & Viswesvaran, 2004).

A deeper critique, voiced by philosophers and critical theorists, concerns the potential commodification of emotional intelligence. In corporate settings, they warn, emotional intelligence

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can be co-opted as a managerial instrument to regulate workers' emotions rather than empower authentic expression. These critiques serve as reminders that emotional intelligence must remain anchored in ethics and empathy – as Steiner insisted – rather than in mere efficiency.

Conclusions

The emergence of emotional intelligence represents one of the most profound intellectual developments of the late twentieth century. From Gardner's pluralistic vision of the mind to Salovey and Mayer's cognitive-affective synthesis, from Bar-On's emotional-social framework to Steiner's moral humanism, and through Goleman's global dissemination, emotional intelligence has reshaped the understanding of what it means to be intelligent. Neuroscience has since confirmed what philosophy and literature long intuited: that emotion is not the enemy of reason but its vital ally.

In its fullest sense, emotional intelligence is not merely the ability to manage feelings or navigate social complexities. It is the art of aligning intellect with empathy of bringing consciousness to the domain of feeling. It invites a renewed definition of intelligence itself: not as the conquest of emotion by reason, but as their symphony. By the close of the twentieth century, psychology had come full circle, returning to an ancient truth that thinkers from Aristotle to Spinoza had articulated that to know the good and to do it well requires not only reason but feeling, not only mind but heart.

In this synthesis, emotion is restored to its rightful place at the centre of human understanding, not as weakness, but as wisdom. As science and society continue to explore the intricate dialogue between cognition and emotion, emotional intelligence endures as a bridge between the analytic and the humane, guiding both thought and action toward greater harmony.

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Бігунов Дмитро. Виникнення емоційного інтелекту: від раціонального пізнання до емоційного розуму.

Мета статті – дослідити еволюцію емоційного інтелекту як психологічного конструкта, проаналізувавши, як він сформувався на

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перетині кількох наукових традицій – когнітивної науки, афективної нейронауки та гуманістичної психології – і став ключовою концепцією для розуміння емоцій та розуму як взаємозалежних форм інтелекту.

Методи дослідження. У статті застосовано теоретико-історичний підхід, заснований на ґрунтовному аналізі психологічної та нейронаукової літератури. Проведено якісний контент-аналіз першоджерел для виявлення концептуальних закономірностей і простеження еволюції теорії емоційного інтелекту. Використано порівняльний та історико-аналітичний методи для дослідження конвергенції когнітивної, афективної та гуманістичної парадигм. За допомогою інтерпретативного синтезу об'єднано різноманітні підходи у цілісне розуміння емоційного інтелекту як наукового конструкта й філософського погляду на природу людини.

Результати дослідження. Розкрито становлення емоційного інтелекту як синтезу когнітивних і емоційних процесів у психології кінця ХХ століття. Простежено розвиток від теорії множинних інтелектів Говарда Гарднера до формальної моделі Саловея і Маера, а також розширення концепції у працях Бар-Она, Стайнера та Голмана. Показано, що емоційний інтелект переосмислив саме поняття інтелекту.

Необхідність статті зумовлена потребою уточнення теоретичних засад емоційного інтелекту, які часто спрощуються у популярних інтерпретаціях. Звернення до його витоків у різних наукових традиціях підтверджує, що емоції розум є взаємозалежними процесами.

Висновки. Доведено, що виникнення емоційного інтелекту стало важливим зрушеннем у сучасній психології, що поєднало когніцію та емоцію в єдину систему людського розуміння. Показано, що від Гарднера до Голмана ця концепція визначає інтелект як гармонію розуму й емпатії, а не їх протиставлення. Зазначено, що повертаючи емоції на центральне місце у свідомості, емоційний інтелект продовжує поєднувати аналітичне та гуманістичне, утвірджуючи, що справжня мудрість народжується з єдності розуму і серця.

Ключові слова: емоційний інтелект, когніція, афект, емпатія, множинні інтелекти.

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