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THE PSYCHOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE: FROM MIND TO FEELINGS

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This article examines the psychological foundations of emotional intelligence and traces its development through major shifts in twentieth-century psychology. Following the evolution from the cognitive revolution to integrative models of mind, the paper explores how leading thinkers redefined the relationship between reason and emotion.

During the 1950s and 1960s, the cognitive revolution portrayed the mind as a logical and systematic information processor. Yet even at the height of this rationalist view, researchers began to question whether thought could exist apart from emotion. They discovered that feeling was not an obstacle to reason but an essential element of how people think, decide, and create.

Within this changing perspective, H. Simon's concept of bounded rationality showed that emotion helps guide decision-making when information and time are limited. G. Miller and U. Neisser demonstrated that cognition depends on meaning and experience, revealing the mind as more than a mechanical system. S. Tomkins's Affect Theory and P. Ekman's studies of facial expressions further established that emotion is biological, motivational, and communicative – the foundation of human connection and empathy. Later, H. Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences recognized intrapersonal and interpersonal understanding as distinct yet vital forms of intelligence.

Together, these developments transformed psychology into a more integrated science of mind and emotion, preparing the conceptual ground for emotional intelligence as a unified model of cognition and affect. The study argues that emotional intelligence did not emerge abruptly but evolved through decades of work aimed at integrating cognition, emotion, and social understanding. It represents psychology's enduring effort to view intelligence not only as the ability to reason but also as the capacity to feel, to understand others, and to act with empathy.

Key words: *emotional intelligence, emotion, cognition, empathy, psychology of emotion.*

Бігунов Дмитро. Психологічні засади емоційного інтелекту: від розуму до почуттів

Стаття присвячена аналізу психологічних засад емоційного інтелекту та простежує його розвиток у контексті ключових змін у психології XX століття. Від когнітивної революції до формування інтегративних моделей свідомості – дослідження розкриває, як провідні науковці переосмислили взаємозв'язок між розумом і емоціями.

У 1950–1960-х роках когнітивна революція представила людський розум як логічну й системну інформаційну структуру. Проте навіть у цей період раціоналістичного оптимізму виникли сумніви щодо можливості відокремлення мислення від емоцій. Було доведено, що почуття не перешкоджають розумовим процесам, а є їх невід'ємною складовою.

У цьому контексті ідея Г. Саймона про обмежену раціональність показала, що емоції спрямовують прийняття рішень за умов браку інформації та часу. Дослідження Дж. Міллера й У. Найссера засвідчили, що когнітивні процеси залежать від значення та досвіду, а розум не можна зводити до механічної системи. Теорія афектів С. Томкінса й експериментальні праці П. Екмана щодо мімічних виразів продемонстрували біологічну та комунікативну природу емоцій як основи людської взаємодії та емпатії. Надалі теорія множинних інтелектів Г. Гарднера визначила внутрішньоособистісне та міжособистісне розуміння як окремі, але важливі форми інтелекту.

Узагальнення цих підходів сприяло формуванню психології як більш інтегрованої науки про розум і емоції та створило теоретичне підґрунтя для концепції емоційного інтелекту як цілісної моделі когніції та афекту. У роботі доводиться, що емоційний інтелект не виник раптово, а є результатом тривалого розвитку ідей, спрямованих на поєднання пізнання, емоцій і соціального розуміння. Він уособлює прагнення сучасної психології розглядати інтелект не лише як здатність мислити, а і як уміння відчувати, розуміти інших і діяти з емпатією.

Ключові слова: *емоційний інтелект, емоції, когніція, емпатія, психологія емоцій.*

Introduction

Throughout the twentieth century, psychology underwent a series of paradigm shifts that profoundly redefined its understanding of the human mind. From behaviourism's focus on observable action to the cognitive revolution's celebration of reasoning and mental representation, the discipline oscillated between extremes of mechanism and meaning. Yet, beneath these scientific transformations, a persistent question remained unresolved: What is the relationship between thought and feeling? It is within this question that the roots of contemporary theories of emotional intelligence can be found.

In recent decades, emotional intelligence has become a central construct in psychology, education, and organizational studies, celebrated for bridging cognitive ability with emotional and social competence. However, the conceptual foundations of emotional intelligence did not emerge suddenly in the 1990s; rather, they were shaped by decades of theoretical and empirical inquiry into the nature of emotion, cognition, and motivation. Understanding this intellectual lineage is essential not only for appreciating emotional intelligence's scientific legitimacy but also for grasping its philosophical depth as a model of the whole mind – one that unites rationality with empathy, logic with feeling, and thought with human connection.

This work seeks to trace the psychological foundations of emotional intelligence through the major theoretical developments of the mid- to late-twentieth century. It explores how thinkers such as Herbert Simon, George A. Miller, Ulric Neisser, Silvan Tomkins, Paul Ekman, and Howard Gardner contributed to reconceptualising the mind as both cognitive and affective, structured yet emotionally responsive. Through their combined influence, psychology gradually moved toward an integrative vision of intelligence – one that recognized that emotion is not an obstacle to reason but a vital component of it.

Thus, **the aim of this article** is to reveal how the convergence of cognitive psychology, affect theory, and social-emotional research laid the groundwork for the emergence of emotional intelligence as a comprehensive framework for understanding human behaviour. By examining the evolution of key psychological ideas and the works of the scholars who shaped them, this paper seeks to demonstrate that the roots of emotional intelligence lie not merely in recent applied theories, but in the deep intellectual transformation of psychology itself – the rediscovery of emotion as an essential form of intelligence.

Materials and methods

The research is based on theoretical and historical analysis of key psychological concepts related to emotion and cognition. The historical method was applied to trace the evolution of ideas from the cognitive revolution to integrative models of mind. Comparative and conceptual analyses were used to examine how different theorists – Herbert Simon, George Miller, Ulric Neisser, Silvan Tomkins, Paul Ekman, and Howard Gardner – conceptualized the interaction between reason and emotion. The synthesis and systematization of these approaches made it possible to reconstruct the theoretical foundations that later gave rise to the concept of emotional intelligence.

The results of the research

By the late 1950s and into the 1960s, psychology underwent a profound transformation often described as "the cognitive revolution". In reaction to the behaviourist insistence that the mind could only be understood through observable behaviour, thinkers such as Herbert Simon, George Miller, and Ulric Neisser sought to reclaim the interior life of thought. Drawing inspiration from emerging fields like computer science and linguistics, they recast the human mind as an information processor – logical, structured, and systematic, capable of encoding, storing, and manipulating symbols in ways that mirrored computational processes. Thought became a form of computation, guided by rules, algorithms, and representations that could, in principle, be simulated by machines.

This new paradigm shifted psychology's focus toward the mechanisms of reasoning, memory, attention, and problem-solving, replacing the reflexes and reinforcement of behaviourism with met-

aphors of input, storage, and retrieval. The human being became, in many respects, a machine of meaning – rational, predictable, and rule-governed.

Yet even at the height of this rationalist optimism, subtle fractures began to appear. Researchers and philosophers alike started to question whether cognition could truly be separated from the flux of emotion, perception, and embodiment. The neat symmetry of the computational model began to blur as evidence mounted that thought and feeling were not opposing forces but deeply entwined expressions of the same biological and experiential fabric. Researchers gradually recognized that the mind did not operate as a cold mechanism of logic alone. Emotions – once treated as disturbances to rational thought – were revealed to be central to judgment, creativity, and decision-making. In this realization, psychology once again approached the ancient question that had haunted philosophy for centuries: What does it mean to think if thinking is always, in some sense, also to feel?

The recognition that emotion informs rather than distorts cognition opened a new horizon for psychological theory. Few thinkers embodied this transition more profoundly than Herbert Simon, whose work reframed rationality itself as an emotional and bounded process. H. Simon, a Nobel laureate in economics and one of the founding figures of artificial intelligence, stood at the crossroads between cognitive science, decision theory, and organizational psychology. In his landmark work "Administrative Behavior", Simon challenged the classical notion of human beings as perfectly rational actors. Instead, he introduced the concept of bounded rationality – the idea that decision-making is constrained by limited information, cognitive capacity, and time. Within this framework, Simon made a strikingly prescient observation: that emotion is not a disruption to thought, but a crucial compass within it [7].

He argued that feelings guide attention, shape judgment, and narrow the field of possible actions, allowing individuals to make choices that are not only efficient but meaningful. Simon's recognition that affective processes guide decision-making underlies the later idea that emotions serve adaptive, organizing functions in cognition – a key conceptual ancestor of emotional intelligence. "*Emotion*," he wrote, "*is not opposed to rationality; it is essential to rationality*." [7, p. 15]. In that single sentence, the scientist anticipated decades of later research in affective neuroscience and psychology, which would reveal the inseparability of cognition and emotion in the architecture of the mind.

Simon's insight prefigured the emergence of emotional intelligence – the understanding that self-awareness, empathy, and emotional regulation are integral components of intelligent behaviour. Long before the term gained prominence through the work of Peter Salovey, John Mayer, and Daniel Goleman, Simon had already illuminated the emotional scaffolding underlying human reasoning. His work bridged two traditions that had long been seen as opposites: the logical precision of the computational model and the nuanced, affective depths of human experience.

In recognizing emotion as a vital partner to reason, Simon helped shift the conversation in psychology from the mechanics of cognition to the meaning of thought itself – a movement that continues to inform contemporary theories of emotional intelligence and the understanding of what it means to be both rational and deeply human.

In turn, George A. Miller, one of the central architects of the cognitive revolution, sought to restore the study of the mind to psychology after decades of dominance by behaviourism. His landmark paper, "The Magical Number Seven, Plus or Minus Two", revealed that human short-term memory could hold only a limited number of informational "chunks" at once, i.e. our capacity to hold information is not infinite but bounded – structured around patterns, organization, and meaning. "*The span of absolute judgment and the span of immediate memory impose severe limitations on the amount of information that we are able to receive, process, and remember*." [4, p. 95]. Rather than treating these limits as mechanical constraints, Miller viewed them as a window into the architecture of consciousness itself. The human mind, he argued, does not passively absorb the world; it actively structures and interprets it. And due to this the necessity of organization for understand-

ing arises [4]. This finding transformed psychology's understanding of cognition: humans were no longer seen as passive responders to stimuli, but as active processors who interpret, categorize, and reconstruct information.

Miller's insight that meaning depends on chunking – the grouping of information into coherent, significant units – hinted at a deeper psychological truth: that cognition is inherently selective, shaped by what the mind deems important. The scientist understood that what we remember and attend to depends not only on information but also on significance, emotion, and personal relevance. And importance, as later theorists of emotion would affirm, is always affectively charged. Emotion gives salience to memory, directs attention, and filters experience through relevance. In this way, Miller's work quietly anticipated a central principle of emotional intelligence – that thought is guided not solely by logic, but by feeling's capacity to mark certain perceptions as significant. In later works, for instance, such as "Plans and the Structure of Behavior", he explored the ways in which goals, motivations, and feedback loops guide human action – themes that would later resonate with emotional intelligence's focus on self-regulation and adaptive behaviour. "*Plans are hierarchically organized behavior sequences, guided by feedback, and shaped by motivation*." [4, p. 17]. Miller's observations reveal that cognition is not mechanical but purpose-driven and meaning-oriented – an early recognition that emotion and motivation structure thought, preparing the way for affective and social dimensions of intelligence.

Moreover, his later collaborations, particularly in founding the Centre for Cognitive Studies at Harvard with Jerome Bruner, pushed the field further toward understanding how people construct meaning, not merely store data. In emphasizing the organization of thought, Miller implicitly opened a doorway toward later conceptions of emotional intelligence. His research suggested that the mind's architecture was not purely computational but interpretive – that cognition is guided by relevance, significance, and context. In this sense, his work laid the groundwork for recognizing that emotions play a critical role in shaping what information is attended to, remembered, and valued. The "limits" Miller discovered in working memory were not flaws but reflections of the human mind's selective, emotionally guided nature – a balance between cognitive efficiency and affective depth.

Where Miller revealed the contours of the mind's structure, Ulric Neisser gave the cognitive revolution its philosophical depth. In his seminal work "Cognitive Psychology", Neisser synthesized emerging theories of attention, perception, and memory into a unifying vision of the mind as an active constructor of reality. He rejected the notion that cognition could be reduced to computational operations, emphasizing instead that perception and memory are deeply contextual – shaped by expectations, purposes, and values. For Neisser, to know was not merely to register stimuli but to interpret the world through the lens of lived experience [6]. The scientist defined cognition as all the processes by which sensory input is transformed, reduced, elaborated, stored, recovered, and used. "*Cognition is the activity of knowing: the acquisition and organization of knowledge.*" [6, p. 4]. His work offered a sweeping vision of the human being as an active constructor of experience, forever engaged in interpreting and reorganizing reality through perception and memory.

However, Neisser was also one of the first major cognitive scientists to critique the cold, mechanical overtones of his own early cognitive theory. He regretted that the early cognitive revolution, in its eagerness to escape behaviourism, had replaced one form of reductionism with another – exchanging reflex for algorithm, body for code. He argued that cognition must be studied not in isolation from life, but as it unfolds in real contexts – social, emotional, and ecological. This conviction led him toward what he later called "ecological cognition": a view of the mind as embedded in the richness of lived experience. "*We must remember that perceiving and remembering are acts of the whole person in a real world*." [6, p. 300]. Neisser's insistence that cognition is contextually embedded – that the perceiving subject cannot be separated from the lived environment – anticipates the holistic perspective later echoed in emotional intelligence: knowing as situated, relational, and affectively charged.

Thus, Neisser recognized that knowledge is not merely a computation of symbols but a form of understanding shaped by motivation, culture, and emotion. In this recognition lies the conceptual bridge to emotional intelligence. Neisser's insistence that cognition is inseparable from the environments and purposes that give it meaning anticipated the later realization that emotion is central to adaptive thinking. Emotional intelligence would come to articulate precisely what Neisser implied – that intelligent behaviour arises not only from abstract reasoning but from the dynamic interplay between mind, feeling, and context.

Through this broader lens, both Miller and Neisser contributed to a profound shift in the psychological understanding of mind. They revealed that cognition is not an isolated process occurring in sterile mental circuitry, but a living, breathing dialogue between perception, feeling, and environment. Their work anticipated the eventual rise of emotional intelligence – a concept that reasserted what their theories implied: that the true measure of intelligence lies not only in reasoning capacity but in the ability to navigate one's own emotions and empathize with those of others.

Just as Simon illuminated the emotional scaffolding of decision-making, Miller and Neisser exposed the affective foundations of meaning and perception. Together, their legacies converge toward a more holistic psychology – one that views the mind not as a machine of computation but as a dynamic system of understanding, sensitivity, and purpose. In this synthesis, the boundaries between cognition and emotion dissolve, giving way to a more complete vision of intelligence: the intelligence of feeling, reflection, and connection – what we now call emotional intelligence.

At the same time, Silvan Tomkins was quietly revolutionizing the psychological understanding of emotion. Across his multi-volume "Affect Theory", Tomkins proposed that human emotions are not secondary reactions or disturbances to thought, but primary motivational systems – innate biological programs that drive perception, memory, and action. Where traditional psychology had often treated emotion as something to be managed or suppressed, Tomkins restored it to its rightful place at the centre of human motivation. He argued that affects are the fundamental organizers of consciousness, shaping not only behaviour but also the construction of identity and social bonds. "*The affect system is the primary motivational system, and all other drives are subordinate to it.*" [8, p. 43]. In Tomkins's vision, emotion was not a shadow cast by reason, but the very energy of life that gives cognition its meaning and direction: "*Without affect, we are robots; without cognition, we are chaos*." [2, p. 56].

Tomkins's influence rippled through generations of researchers, none more profoundly than his student Paul Ekman, who transformed these theoretical insights into empirical science: "*Facial expressions of emotion are not learned but are the product of evolution*." [1, p. 11]. Through meticulous cross-cultural studies, Ekman identified a set of universal facial expressions corresponding to basic emotions such as joy, anger, sadness, fear, disgust, and surprise. His pioneering work, culminating in "Emotion in the Human Face", provided compelling evidence that emotion is not a cultural artefact but a biological constant – a shared human language encoded in the musculature of the face. "*Emotions are automatic appraisals that prepare the organism to respond.*" [1, p. 45]. Emotion, in Ekman's framing, was both innate and communicative: a bridge between minds, a pre-verbal form of understanding that binds individuals to one another through recognition and empathy.

This reframing carried profound implications for psychology. It turned out that if emotion is a primary, adaptive system of signalling and connection, then emotional life is not the enemy of reason but one of its deepest foundations. Tomkins and Ekman together demonstrated that affect is the grammar of social interaction – the means by which human beings attune to each other's inner states and navigate the complexities of trust, cooperation, and belonging. Their work anticipated the central insight that would later define emotional intelligence: that the capacity to recognize, interpret, and manage emotion – in oneself and in others – is not peripheral to intelligence but essential to it.

Seen through this lens, the trajectory from Tomkins to Ekman represents a pivotal evolution in modern psychology: the movement from viewing emotion as disruptive to viewing it as adaptive,

communicative, and integrative. Their research helped bridge the gap between cognitive science and affective neuroscience, laying the empirical groundwork for the very idea that intelligence must encompass not only logic and reasoning but empathy, attunement, and emotional literacy. In affirming that feeling is a form of knowing, they helped redefine what it means to be emotionally – and therefore truly – intelligent.

By the 1980s, psychology had begun to move toward a long-awaited integration. The once rigid divisions between cognition, emotion, and social behaviour were giving way to a more unified vision of the human mind – one that recognized intellect and feeling as interdependent expressions of human adaptability. Within this evolving paradigm, Howard Gardner's "Frames of Mind" offered a profound reimagining of what it means to be intelligent: "*An intelligence entails the ability to solve problems or fashion products that are of consequence in a particular cultural setting*." [3, p. 15]. Rejecting the narrow reductionism of a single, measurable IQ, Gardner proposed his theory of multiple intelligences, arguing that the human intellect is not a monolith but a constellation of distinct yet interwoven capacities.

Among these, Gardner identified intrapersonal intelligence – the ability to know and understand oneself, one's motives, and one's emotional states – and interpersonal intelligence – the capacity to perceive, interpret, and respond effectively to the emotions and intentions of others. Together, these forms of intelligence emphasized the emotional and relational dimensions of human life, reframing self-awareness and empathy as genuine forms of cognitive sophistication rather than soft psychological traits. Gardner's theory thus marked a profound shift: it asserted that rational thought cannot be divorced from emotional and social understanding, and that the measure of intellect extends beyond problem-solving to include the ability to navigate the inner and social worlds of feeling. Moreover, his work reoriented psychology toward a richer, more humane conception of intelligence – one that placed empathy, self-reflection, and emotional awareness at the heart of intellectual life.

In this intellectual climate, psychology stood on the threshold of a new synthesis. The groundwork laid by figures such as Gardner – along with earlier pioneers who had explored the interdependence of affect and cognition – prepared the way for a deeper articulation of the mind's emotional capacities. What emerged in the following decade was not a rejection of cognitive science but its natural extension: an understanding that true intelligence encompasses not only how we think but also how we feel, relate, and find meaning. This integrative turn would soon crystallize into the framework now known as emotional intelligence – the culmination of psychology's century-long journey toward uniting reason and emotion as twin aspects of human understanding.

Conclusions

The intellectual journey from the cognitive revolution to the emergence of emotional intelligence reflects psychology's gradual reconciliation of reason and feeling – a return to the complexity of the human mind. From Herbert Simon's recognition that emotion is intrinsic to rationality, to George Miller and Ulric Neisser's framing of cognition as an organized yet meaning-laden system, the discipline moved beyond the mechanistic metaphors of the mid-twentieth century. The mind was no longer seen as a dispassionate processor of information, but as a living, adaptive network where emotion and cognition continually shape one another.

Moreover, Silvan Tomkins and Paul Ekman extended this transformation by grounding emotion in biological universality and communicative purpose. Their work revealed affect not as noise within the cognitive system but as its organizing rhythm – a language of motivation, empathy, and connection. Building upon this, Howard Gardner articulated multiple forms of intelligence, placing intrapersonal and interpersonal understanding alongside logical and linguistic reasoning. In this, he gave psychological legitimacy to capacities that would later be formally conceptualized as emotional intelligence.

Thus, taken together, these developments mark a profound shift in the history of psychology: the rediscovery of emotion as a form of knowledge. The theories of these thinkers collectively

demonstrate that to understand the mind is to recognize its dual nature – analytic and affective, individual and social, biological and symbolic. Emotional intelligence thus stands not as a contemporary innovation alone but as the culmination of decades of inquiry into how human beings think, feel, and connect. It represents psychology's enduring effort to integrate the measurable and the meaningful, the rational and the compassionate – to understand intelligence not merely as the capacity to reason, but as the ability to be fully human.

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