

FOUNDATIONS OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE IN 19TH-CENTURY PSYCHOLOGICAL THOUGHT

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This article explores the conceptual foundations of emotional intelligence within 19th-century psychological thought, emphasizing the contributions of Charles Darwin, Wilhelm Wundt, and William James (along with Carl Lange). Although the term "emotional intelligence" only appeared in the late 20th century, its theoretical roots reach back to early debates about the role of emotions in human cognition, adaptation, and behaviour. Ch. Darwin's evolutionary approach reframed emotions as biologically rooted, universally expressed, and socially functional. W. Wundt introduced a structural and dynamic model of emotional states, offering a measurable, multidimensional framework for analyzing feelings within experimental psychology. W. James and C. Lange proposed a somatic basis for emotion, suggesting that emotional experience emerges from the perception of bodily changes, which laid the groundwork for modern understandings of interoception and self-awareness.

Each of these thinkers contributed to re-evaluating emotions as essential and lawful components of consciousness – paving the way for contemporary models of emotional intelligence, such as those by John D. Mayer, Peter Salovey, and David R. Goleman. The article highlights how these 19th-century theories form the intellectual triad underpinning the modern understanding of emotional intelligence: social functionality, structural measurability, and embodied awareness. Reconnecting emotional intelligence to its historical roots allows for a deeper appreciation of its relevance across education, leadership, and mental health. It also demonstrates that emotional intelligence is not a recent invention, but a historically grounded construct emerging from a long-standing effort to reintegrate affect into the scientific understanding of the human mind.

Key words: emotions, self-awareness, emotional intelligence, behaviour, emotion regulation.

Бігунов Дмитро. Основи емоційного інтелекту у психологічній думці 19-го століття

У статті досліджуються концептуальні засади емоційного інтелекту у психологічній думці 19-го століття, з акцентом на внесок Ч. Дарвіна, В. Вундта та В. Джеймса (разом із К. Ланге). Хоча термін «емоційний інтелект» з'явився лише наприкінці 20-го століття, його теоретичне коріння сягає ранніх дебатів про роль емоцій у людському пізнанні, адаптації та поведінці. Еволюційний підхід Ч. Дарвіна переосмислив емоції як біологічно вкорінені, універсально виражені та соціально функціональні. В. Вундт представив структурно-динамічну модель емоційних станів, пропонуючи вимірну, багатовимірну основу для аналізу почуттів в експериментальній психології. В. Джеймс і К. Ланге запропонували соматичну основу емоцій, припустивши, що емоційний досвід виникає зі сприйняття тілесних змін, що заклало основу для сучасного розуміння інтероцепції та самосвідомості.

Кожен із цих мислителів зробив свій внесок у переоцінку емоцій як важливих і законних компонентів свідомості, проклавши шлях до сучасних моделей емоційного інтелекту, як-от моделі Дж. Майєра, П. Саловія та Д. Гоулмана. У статті висвітлюється те, як ці теорії 19-го століття формують інтелектуальну тріаду, що лежить в основі сучасного розуміння емо-

ційного інтелекту, як-от: соціальна функціональність, структурна вимірність і втілене усвідомлення. Відновлення зв'язку емоційного інтелекту з його історичним корінням дозволяє глибше оцінити його актуальність в освіті, лідерстві та психічному здоров'ї. Погляд у минуле дозволяє краще зрозуміти, чому емоції стали центральними для міжособистісної взаємодії та саморегуляції в сучасному світі. Це також демонструє, що емоційний інтелект – це не недавній винахід, а історично обґрунтований конструкт, що з'явився в результаті тривалих зусиль, спрямованих на реінтеграцію афектів у наукове розуміння людського розуму.

Ключові слова: емоції, самосвідомість, емоційний інтелект, поведінка, регуляція емоцій.

Problem statement. The 19th century was marked by a profound transformation in the understanding of human nature across philosophy, science, and especially psychology, where the first attempts were made to conceptualize the nature of emotions as a significant component of personality. During this time, there was a gradual rethinking of the role of feelings – from being seen as obstacles to rational thought to being recognized as independent cognitive and social resources. These ideas laid the psychological groundwork for the later development of the concept of emotional intelligence.

Nevertheless, despite growing interest in the phenomenon of feeling, emotions remained peripheral in scientific inquiry compared to cognitive functions such as perception, memory, and attention. Classical experimental psychology, rooted in the works of Wilhelm Wundt, Edward Titchener, and their followers, focused primarily on measurable and observable aspects of consciousness. Emotions were considered too subjective, variable, and difficult to control in laboratory settings.

In its turn psychoanalysis contributed significantly to rekindling interest in emotional life, but its focus remained on unconscious conflicts rather than on the functional role of emotions in adaptation, communication, and decision-making.

It is precisely this theoretical “forgetting” of emotions that makes their study especially relevant today. Emotional intelligence (EI) – emerging at the intersection of cognitive, social, and affective psychology – requires not only applied interest but also deep historical and theoretical reflection. Without understanding how attitudes toward emotions evolved over centuries, it is impossible to fully appreciate the integrative role emotional intelligence plays in contemporary views of personality, education, leadership, and mental health.

The aim of the article is to outline and to analyse the foundations of the concept of emotional intelligence in psychology of the 19th century.

Results of the research. Despite the general distrust toward emotions within early academic psychology, some thinkers – mainly from adjacent disciplines – began, even in the 19th century, to treat emotions as a legitimate subject of scientific analysis. One such pioneer was Charles Darwin, whose ideas anticipated many principles of modern affective and social psychology.

One of his lesser-known yet deeply innovative works, “The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals” (1872), was more than just a biological treatise. This work marked a shift toward understanding emotions as evolutionarily significant and universal phenomena, integrating behaviour, physiology, and psychology within a unified theoretical framework. Thus, Darwin argued that emotions are not exclusive to humans; they have deep zoological roots and can be observed in many species, especially mammals, suggesting their ancient and cross-species origins. He claimed that the expression of emotions is universal: facial expressions, bodily postures, and vocal signals function as tools of communication not only within species but also across species. Furthermore, emotions serve adaptive functions by increasing chances of survival and reproduction, enhancing the effectiveness of responses to threats, opportunities, and social interactions. Darwin proposed that emotional expressions are innate rather than culturally learned, seeking evidence in cross-cultural comparisons and in observations of blind individuals who, without visual modelling, displayed the same facial expressions as their sighted peers [1].

It should be noted that although Darwin wrote as a naturalist, his ideas had an enormous influence on the emerging sci-

ence of psychology. He was among the first to demonstrate that emotions are mutually recognizable – interpreted nonverbally and cross-culturally – and that they serve as the basis for social regulation by helping coordinate behaviour, define hierarchies, express belonging or threat. He also emphasized that emotions can be consciously recognized and controlled, forming the foundation for reflective interaction.

Thus, Darwin's work on the expression of emotions laid the foundation for the later development of the entire discipline of evolutionary emotion psychology and, ultimately, the concept of emotional intelligence. He was the first to show that emotions are not merely internal, subjective states, but bio-social signals crucial for adaptation, communication, and survival.

While Darwin viewed emotions as universal, evolutionarily ingrained mechanisms, his approach remained primarily behavioural and expressive. This limitation was overcome by Wilhelm Wundt, the first to systematically organize emotional states within psychological science.

Wilhelm Wundt is a figure of exceptional importance in the history of psychology. He is considered the founder of scientific psychology, establishing it as an independent experimental discipline distinct from philosophy and physiology. In 1879, Wundt founded the first psychological laboratory in Leipzig, where he applied introspection – not as philosophical reflection, but as systematic observation of mental processes under controlled conditions using externally fixed stimuli and timed intervals.

His method is often called introspectionism [2], but unlike the intuitive self-analysis of earlier philosophers, Wundt's introspection was structured, controlled, and quantitatively recorded: standardized stimuli were presented to subjects, and their reactions were documented in terms of timing, intensity, and modality.

Wundt treated emotions (or "affects") as one of the three basic components of consciousness, alongside sensations and volitional acts. He insisted that feelings are not derivative of sensations or actions but have their own temporal and qualitative structure and represent variable yet lawful processes. The scientist was interested in the structural

and dynamic properties of emotions, not just their content. He believed that every affect can be mapped across three independent dimensions: *"Every feeling may be placed in a system of three dimensions: pleasure and displeasure, excitement and depression, and strain and relaxation"* [3] (see Table 1).

This model made it possible for the first time to conceptualize emotions not as discrete categories (anger, joy, fear, etc.) but as a continuum of states measurable and classifiable along scales. Wundt analyzed the dynamics of emotional experience in detail – how emotions evolve over time, change in intensity, are modulated by perception, and can be amplified or suppressed by volitional effort. This led to the understanding that emotions are processual and, therefore, can be regulated – not merely reactive.

Besides, Wundt believed that emotions could not be understood solely through physiology or intuitive reflection – experimental control over subjective experience was necessary: *"The feelings are not only accessible to introspection, but they are also capable of being brought under exact observation in experimental conditions"* [4].

Although Wundt did not use the term "emotional intelligence," he proposed key conceptual foundations that were later integrated into 20th-century models of emotional intelligence (see Table 2).

Wundt's research marked a qualitatively new stage in understanding emotions – as structured, dynamic, and controllable states embedded in consciousness and behaviour. His scientific model turned emotions from subjective "outbursts" into a subject of systematic analysis and education. This paradigm later made it possible to treat emotional abilities as psychological competencies that can be developed – this is the core idea of emotional intelligence.

At the same time, the nature of emotional experience was radically reinterpreted by William James and Carl Lange, who argued that emotions are not primary mental acts, but results of interpreting physiological changes.

William James, one of the founders of American psychology and the author of the famous work *"The Principles of Psychology"* (1890), not only laid the foundations of psychological science in this book but also

Table 1

Three-Dimensional Model of Emotional States

Axis	Content	Example
Pleasure ↔ Displeasure	Affective valence	Joy ↔ Disgust
Excitement ↔ Calm	Level of physiological arousal	Anger ↔ Boredom
Strain ↔ Relaxation	Dynamics / tone of emotional process	Anxiety ↔ Relief after crying

Table 2

Wundt's Legacy in the Development of Emotional Intelligence

Wundt's Concept	Core Idea	Influence on Emotional Intelligence	Modern Models / Authors
Emotions as measurable parameters	Structural analysis of emotions along coordinate axes	Basis for standardized EI tests	MSCEIT (Mayer – Salovey), psychometrics of EI
Multiaxial model of affects	Emotions described via three basic dichotomies (valence, arousal, etc.)	Modelling emotional experience as a coordinate system	Circumplex model (Russell), valence-arousal models
The concept of emotional dynamics	Emotions are processual, unfold over time, and can be analyzed in phases	Foundations of theories of emotion regulation and emotional management	James Gross's model; Goleman's self-regulation
Introspection as a cognitive tool	Internal observation enables awareness and classification of emotions	Basis for emotional self-awareness	Self-awareness in Goleman's EI
Cultural variability of expression	Emotional expressions vary between people and have symbolic meaning	Basis for the development of empathy and interpersonal sensitivity	Empathy, social awareness (Goleman)
Emotions as the foundation of consciousness	Emotions are one of the basic forms of mental life along with volition and perception	Integration of emotion as a cognitive resource in intelligence	The general idea of emotional intelligence as the "intelligence of emotions" (EI ≠ just IQ)

proposed a revolutionary theory of emotions that would remain the subject of debate for decades. His interdisciplinary approach – at the intersection of philosophy, physiology, and psychology – predetermined the depth of his reflections on the nature of emotional experience.

The key thesis of James is that emotions are not the primary reaction to an event, but arise as the result of awareness of bodily changes caused by that event. He claimed: "*We feel sorry because we cry, angry because we strike, afraid because we tremble <...>*" [5]. According to this hypothesis, when a person faces any danger, it is the bodily reaction that activates first (muscle tension, rapid heartbeat, sweating), and only afterward consciousness recognises this physiological activity as "fear". For James, emotions are

felt bodily states, reflected upon and made meaningful by the subject.

The idea that emotions are embodied experiences was innovative for several reasons. First, unlike the tradition of Cartesian dualism, James asserted that consciousness and the body are inseparable: emotions are not abstract "mental states" but bodily-lived experiences of a situation. Furthermore, he was the first to propose a mechanism for how emotions are generated, in which experience is the result of introspection of bodily signals. Finally, this interpretation of emotions made them inseparable from self-reflection, which would later become a cornerstone of the concept of emotional self-awareness – a key component of emotional intelligence.

Many of James's ideas laid the groundwork for modern models of emotional intelligence,

especially in the areas of self-awareness and interoception (the perception of internal bodily states) (See Table 3).

James's theory marked a turning point in the study of emotions: he shifted the focus from emotions as abstract experiences to their bodily foundations, emphasizing that the conscious perception of these bodily reactions is the emotional experience. This viewpoint paved the way for understanding emotions as navigators of subjective life, guided through attention, reflection, and the body. Such understanding of emotions as embodied and observable states became the theoretical foundation of emotional intelligence in the 20th century.

Almost simultaneously with W. James, the Danish physiologist Carl Lange came to similar conclusions. Based on vascular reactions of the organism, Lange also claimed that physical changes are primary, emotions are secondary: *"It is the bodily changes themselves that are felt as emotion; we do not weep because we are sad, we are sad because we weep"* [6].

Later, the views of James and Lange were combined into what became known as the James – Lange theory, the first psychophysiological theory of emotions in history. The essence of this theory is as follows: "Emotion is the conscious perception of physiological changes caused by an external stimulus". The James – Lange theory was the first attempt to scientifically explain emotions through physiological processes, thus launching an entire direction in psychology – the psychophysiology of emotions.

At the same time, the James – Lange theory did not go unchallenged. As early as the 1920s, Walter Cannon and Philip Bard proposed an alternative model, according to

which emotions and physiological responses occur simultaneously, not sequentially. Their Cannon – Bard theory claimed that emotion is initiated in the thalamus, which simultaneously triggers both the bodily reaction and emotional awareness [7].

It is also worth noting that the ideas of James – Lange became one of the philosophical and scientific foundations for concepts such as:

- emotional self-awareness (the ability to notice and recognize one's own bodily signals as markers of emotional states);
- regulation of emotions through body-based practices (breathing techniques, expressive movement, working with muscular tension);
- embodied cognition (the notion that the body is not just a "carrier of the mind" but an active co-author of emotion and decision-making).

These components formed the basis for modern emotional intelligence models, including Goleman's concept of self-awareness and somatic sensitivity [8], and Mayer and Salovey's focus on recognizing and interpreting internal emotional signals [9].

Analysis of the research results. Together, these approaches – evolutionary (Darwin), structural-psychological (Wundt), and somatic (James – Lange) – created a theoretical triad from which the ideas of the concept of emotional intelligence grew in the 20th century (See Table 4).

Thus, by the end of the 19th century, three key lines had formed in the intellectual landscape that would later form the basis of the emotional intelligence concept: the social functionality of emotions (Darwin), their structurability and measurability (Wundt) and their embodiment and connection to bodily self-perception (James & Lange).

Table 3

The Influence of W. James on Emotional Intelligence

James's Idea	Influence on EI	Contemporary Authors
Emotion as awareness of bodily reaction	Foundation of emotional self-awareness	Daniel Goleman
The body as the source of emotional experience	Integration of body and mind in emotion regulation	Lisa Feldman Barrett, Antonio Damasio, Daniel Goleman, Peter Levine, Bessel van der Kolk
Emotion as a process, not a thing	Supports the concept of emotion as a dynamic skill	Mayer – Salovey

Table 4

Influence on the Theory of Emotional Intelligence

Researcher	Focus	Key Contribution	Influence on EI
Charles Darwin	Behaviour, evolution	Emotions as adaptation, universal expressions	Interpersonal intelligence, empathy
Wilhelm Wundt	Structure and measurement of emotions	Emotional space model	Emotional awareness
W. James / C. Lange	Physiology → consciousness	Emotions = perception of bodily changes	Embodiment, emotional self-awareness

Together, they defined the framework for understanding emotions not as secondary or merely “subjective” states, but as multidimensional psychophysiological processes, deeply integrated into behaviour, interpersonal communication, and self-awareness. It is this multidimensionality – cognitive, bodily, and social – that became the foundation for emotional intelligence theories in the 20th century, starting with the work of Mayer and Salovey and gaining wide recognition through the popularization of the concept by Daniel Goleman.

Conclusions. Summing up mentioned above, it should be noted that the understanding of emotional intelligence is inseparably linked to its deep historical and scientific roots. Although the term ‘emotional intelligence’ only appeared in the second half of the 20th century, its foundation was laid

much earlier – within philosophical, biological, and psychological theories that gradually shifted the focus from the rationalist ideal of a ‘cold mind’ toward a more holistic and realistic view of human consciousness.

Emotions – once considered the enemies of reason – began to be understood as natural, meaningful, and even cognitive components of the psyche. Darwin showed that emotions are universal evolutionary mechanisms of communication and survival; Wundt provided a scientific structure to emotional space, making feelings a subject of objective analysis; and James and Lange emphasised the bodily nature of emotions, guiding us toward the concept of emotional self-awareness. Together, these lines of thought formed the scientific context in which the idea of emotional intelligence became both possible and necessary.

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