

The phenomenon “Emotional Thinking”

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Abstract: In the article, on the basis of an extensive analysis of the views of renowned scientists regarding emotions and thinking, conclusions are made about the essence, measurability and personal needs for emotional thinking. Among these conclusions are: 1. Emotional thinking can be measured through the EQ-i. But the difference between cognitive intellect, in which the highest levels are in the age of 17-18 years, after which its levels undergo minimal changes during the course of the whole active life of the individual and only in the elderliness it starts to decline; emotional EQ-i can change and increase in every age, depending on the acquired life experience. 2. The higher level of emotional thinking expands also the general level of intellect. 3. There is enough evidence to assume that it is possible to improve the level of emotional intelligence. 4. Emotional thinking is defined by the specific characteristics, which are needed in education and in work. Knowing and understanding its essence affects the level of learning the knowledge.

Keywords: Emotional Thinking, Emotional Intelligence, Musical Psychology, Musical Education

1. Introduction

In the last decade, the accent, which is put on the need for the formation of personalities with a free, unusual intellectual development, with newer behavioral manifestations, with flexible adaptability and sense for the established changes, becomes ever more apparent. In the diversity of the new realities, of constantly developing economic, sociocultural and scientific views and values, the changes in personality development become more and more visible. Their dynamics, aimed at the internal spiritual world and the thinking of the individual, at the development of intellect, are strongly expressed.

2. Subject, Aim, Tasks

The subject of the present study is the phenomenon “Emotional thinking” of the person.

The main aim is to define emotional thinking and to identify its main characteristics.

The particular *tasks*, which have to be accomplished as stages in the realization of this goal, are:

Analysis of the views of renowned psychologists about the essence and measurability of human emotions.

Research the development of the views on human thinking.

Summarize the theoretical standpoints and extract the main characteristics of emotional thinking.

The structure of the study imposes as the *object of research* the works of accomplished specialists in different areas of human knowledge on the questions of emotions and thinking.

The main instrument of the study is the theoretical analysis of valuable conceptions about emotions and thinking.

3. The Concept of Emotions

Contemporary experimental studies of the interrelations between emotional processes and the contents of the mental processes show that, when in a state of emotional arousal, changes appear in the flow of mental processes. These transformations are related to facilitation or hindering of the individual in perceiving some events, to changes in the direction of thought processes, to the flow of the processes of memorization and reproduction, to changes in the contents and proportions of the notions, the fantasies, the activities of solving problems.

All of this has led to the appearance of a series of studies and books, covering the results of performed studies by different authors, sparking different discussions.

At the same time, the thesis of the significance of the

present day scientific achievements in a wider interconnection of scientific spheres is already axiomatic. They go beyond their parameters through more and more broad integration. In this way new scientific populations emerge.

The problems, arising from the subject of the emotional development of the person, are also perceived in a different way. These, at their core psychological studies, have already entered into many scientific spheres – of Pedagogics, of Philosophy, of General Medicine, of Psychiatry, of Neurology, Endocrinology, Cardiology, Neuropsychology. Even in the wake of the discovery of Neurophysiology, the question of emotions as a place of intersection of Psychology, Physiology and a number of other sciences was also posed.

In the beginning of the 1990's, the first attempts began to unveil the phenomenon of "Emotional thinking", of its definition, measurement and usage. It was first introduced by *P. Salovey* and *J. Mayer* [13]. At that initial stage, they wrote that this was an "ability to project some of one's personal feelings and emotions on other people" („способност да се отразяват някои собствени чувства и емоции при други хора“) [13, p. 8]. At the same time, the authors noted that this was an ability "to distinguish and to use the received information about emotions in the management of every thought and action of the individual" („да се различава и да се използва получената информация за емоциите при ръководството на всяко мислене и действие на личността“) [Ibid., p. 208]. On the basis of extensive theoretical analysis, they pointed out and presented some ideas for its correct usage. The views, expressed by them of the phenomenon, gave an impulse for new researches and therefore new theoretical developments.

But in order for the phenomenon "Emotional Thinking" to be unveiled and analyzed in a natural way, emotions and thinking need to be defined as its essential components.

The understanding of the essence of *emotions* has historically undergone a long way of development. One of the first authors, who analyzed them as a fact of the consciousness was *Wilhelm Wundt* [18]. He expressed the opinion that there was a special type of psychic events – "emotional" ones, which, according to the author "are expressed with an infinite variability" („се проявяват с безгранична разнородност“) [18, p. 21]. Due to the impossibility of language to define them verbally, coming from the lack of sufficient number of terms for their description, he separated them in groups of "emotional processes". This view of *Wilhelm Wundt* sparked many debates. Most of all, it was proven that he "mixed emotions with the states of their experiencing" („смесва емоциите и състоянията на тяхното преживяване“) [after: 8, p. 24]. Debated was also his statement that emotions were a distinct type of psychic events. The polemics inspired on their turn new researches, which led to a radical shift in the views on the nature of emotional events. In the discussion about them, the authors defined them: as a specific type of physiological processes – *James, Watson, Wenger*; as a regulator of the actions – *Titchener, McDougal, Dollard & Miller* and others;

as a form, reflecting and regulating the brain – *Rubinstein, Jacobson, Smirnov* and others; as a form that reflects the reality – *Shingarov* and others.

Regardless of the differences in the views of the authors, of the unique approaches, which have appeared as a result of different methodological and worldview bases, as well as of the specific conceptions of the authors, many common threads are found in them. Several important characteristics of the studied emotional process have been discovered. It has been defined that it basically represented "an answer to the regulatory mechanisms of signals, which have an importance for the biological or psychological balance of the subject" („отговор на регулационните механизми на сигналите, които имат значение за биологичното или за психичното равновесие на субекта“) [11, p. 49], while this answer also has its own defining characteristics – a degree of emotional arousal, a sign of the emotion (positive or negative), contents (quality) of the emotional processes.

Especially well studied already are the psychological manifestations and mechanisms of emotions (changes in the heart and respiratory rate, changes in the functions of the sensory organs and the nervous system – dryness in the mouth, perspiration, etc.), their effect on psychic functions (increase of the suggestibility, decrease or increase of the control over the will and others), types of behavior, which the emotions incite (anxiety, joy, laughter, hatred, etc.). Even the role of the culture of the person for expressing emotions has also been researched.

It is undeniable that in the process of evolution, emotions have appeared as a means through which the living beings determine the biological significance of the condition of the organism is in and the external influences. Later on, the emotions have been differentiated and formed distinct types, which are marked by their psychological characteristics and interconnections of their course of flow.

The simplest form of emotions is the emotional tone of sensations, accompanying the separate essentially important influences (taste, temperature and others). On this level, the two polar classes are differentiated – positive and negative emotions.

It has already been proven that emotions occur with every cognitive action of the human being. All levels of these cognitive processes – from the sensations and perceptions, to thinking and speech, are stimulated by emotions. In this way, they become a type of engine for the psychological development. At the same time, each emotion supposes a readiness for actions, leads to a direction with proven efficiency, depending on the person's ability to overcome the unavoidable challenges in their life.

But, regardless of the diversity of alternative views, emotions most often are defined in sum as a common, intense and brief reaction of the organism, which includes an immediate positive or negative assessment of different objects or processes of the objective reality [1, p. 155]. They are inseparable from the person. Their manifestation is always in the form of physiological, biochemical and psychic reactions. On its part, the appearance and action of

whichever emotional reaction integrate in itself psychic, neurohumoral and somatic-vegetative processes. In each separate incident, these processes are combined in a specific way, whereat the emotional reactions are clearly differentiated – in regard to external objective signs, as well as to subjective experiences.

Especially important are the questions about the relations of the psychic activity to the human brain, as well as the interrelations between the physic and physiological in emotions. In reality, these questions have not been studied extensively yet and this continues to make them especially debatable. At the same time, they have importance for the gnoseological characteristic of emotions as a form of reflecting the reality.

One of the discussed at the moment definitions of emotions belongs to *J. Lipper* [6]. According to him, emotions have the meaning of the primal motivation of the person and represent processes, which awaken, maintain and guide its activity. The author supports the thesis that emotions are closely related to the needs and motivations of the individuals. This could be accepted in view of the understanding that in the beginning of the process of realization of an activity of the conscious, the emotion exists as a motive for the performance of a practical activity, which leads to the fulfillment of the arisen need. Actually, the questions of the needs and motivations, as well as the questions of emotions, are internally interconnected. This thesis is supported by many psychologies, which connect the appearance of emotions to needs. It has been expressed initially by *S. L. Rubinstein* [12]. He writes that “we cannot understand correctly the essence of needs outside their specific manifestation in emotions, outside the concrete psychic form of their existence” („не можем да разберем правилно същността на потребностите извън конкретната им проява в емоциите, извън конкретната психическа форма на тяхното съществуване“) [12, p. 123]. Emotions are a sort of reflection of the objective relations between subjects and events of the reality and the needs and necessities of the individual. But, despite the existence of a lot of empirical data, the question of the internal logical connection between needs and emotions has not yet been clarified sufficiently, due to which it remains debatable.

Regarding the content side of emotions, a consensus has not been reached either between the different authors. One of the most established now views has been expressed by *Howard Gardner* [3]. According to him, unlike language or space, emotions are not “contents”, which can be processed. He proves the thesis that they only accompany cognitive operations [3, p. 201].

4. The Relation Emotions – Thinking

Another contemporary author, *Daniel Goleman* [4] uses the word “emotion” as a term, representing “each arousal or disturbance in the consciousness, each sensation, passion; each intensive or extreme mental state” („всяка възбуда или

смут в съзнанието, усещане, страст; всяко интензивно или крайно мисловно състояние“) [4, p. 271]. According to him, at their core all emotions are impulses, stimuli for action, instant programs for different life situations, embedded in the human being by evolution. He highlights that immediately connected to emotions is the problem of thinking and has developed one of the first scientific works, dedicated on their interrelations. In it, he establishes the thesis that, while in a state of emotional arousal, significant changes in the running of thought processes appear – facilitation or hindering of the perception of certain events, a change in the direction of thought processes, in the course of the processes of memorization and reproduction, changes in the contents and proportions of notions, fantasies, activities for the solving of problems. Many other authors also write about this, but in the above-mentioned work, the interrelations between emotions and thinking are the most thoroughly clarified.

Yanusz Reykowski [11] also seeks the role and impact of emotional processes on the course of notions and the flow of the processes of thought. The author theoretically analyses the works of different authors and reaches to the statements that the emotional processes “effect in an activating way the intellectual processes, i.e. cause their quantitative increase, unfolding, and sometimes also their acceleration” („въздействат активизиращо върху интелектуалните процеси, т.е. предизвикват тяхното количествено нарастване, разгръщане, а понякога и тяхното ускоряване“), but he highlights that at the same time they “affect selectively the intellectual processes, facilitating the appearance of associative processes, the contents of which are in a close relations with the contents of emotional processes” („влияят избирателно върху съдържанието на интелектуалните процеси, благоприятствайки появата на асоциативните процеси, съдържанието на които се намира във връзка със съдържанието на емоционалните процеси“) [11, p. 260].

The results from the research work of *F. Wilks* [17] show decisively that under the influence of emotional processes, the flow of mental processes undergoes certain modifications. According to him, these modifications affect all forms of mental processes. They are expressed mainly in their improvement and focusing. The changes, which appear in mental processes, are found in a meaningful relation with the running emotional processes.

Even though it has been expressed quite earlier, the opinion of *D. Wechsler* [16] about thinking can be taken as somewhat of an addition. He is the first author who has hypothetically noted that there is a scale of types of thinking, which is in a direct relation with other psychical processes; among them he lists emotions. Later, this thesis has been developed and argued by *H. Gardner* in „Intelligence Reframed“ [3] with the definition of a “multiple intelligence”. Challenging the conception of a unified universal intelligence, the American psychologist classifies in a new way the different “human gifts”, among which he includes also thinking. According to the author, the

categorization of types of thinking should be expanded. On the basis of the different categories of intelligence, defined by him – spatial-visual, linguistic, musical, bodily-kinesthetic, logical-mathematical, interpersonal and intrapersonal – he places the questions of their corresponding types of thinking, while he also marks the internal correlations of their comprising psychological processes.

What was stated here gives reason to accept the thesis that the realization of all actions is preceded by a series of mental operations. They are described with the help of such notions as perception, memorization, assessment and understanding of the problem and taking of decisions, anticipation of events, development of plans; and these, namely, are the processes of thinking. To them he attributes the imagination and fantasizing.

Generally, the notion of *thinking* is filled with a too wide meaning, which is related to the diverse manifestations and states of the human. The problems, connected with it, are mainly subject to Psychology, although they are also posed in different scientific areas (Philosophy, Pedagogy, Defectology and others).

Among the authors with a significant contribution to the study of thinking are the names of *A. Binet, S. L. Rubinstein, W. Kehler, J. Piaget, H. Wallon, V. N. Pushkin, O.K. Tihomirov and others* [after: 14].

Already established in the sphere of Psychology is the statement that thinking reflects that psychological process, which integrates in itself the perception, memory and imagination. It is defined as a "higher cognitive psychic process of generalized, focused and mediated by the available knowledge reflection of the world, of its laws and coherent relations, realized in the intellectual activity of the person" („висш познавателен психически процес на обобщено, целенасочено и опосредствано от налични знания отражение на света, на неговите закони и закономерни връзки, реализирано в интелектуалната дейност на човека“) [10, p. 134-135]. At the same time, thinking consists of processes of independent seeking and finding of the significant new. It can be assumed that it appears on the basis of the practical activity of the individual and depends on sensory knowledge, but exceeds its boundaries thanks to language. In this position, thinking is processes of conscious reflection of the reality in those of its objective qualities, connections and relations, which include also the unreachable for a direct sensory perception objects [10].

The processes of thinking is the most precise, structured and focused form of intellectual activity, which is unfolded, when the person invests special efforts, in order to find a solution for a specific problem – the typical form of mental activity, coming from the performing of specific work.

It has been proven that the main aspects of thinking are the problem-orientation, generalization and intermediateness. The typology of thinking is in a relation with its cognitive structures. A classification of the types of thinking of the human being has also already been done. But,

alongside its established two main types – concrete (objective, practical or active and figurative) and abstract (notion-summarized, verbal-logical and theoretically generalized, directed at explaining the events and understanding the most common and obscure correlations); others have also been defined in the last decade. The changes, which have been prevalent in all spheres of real life, impose the discovering also of new directions in the typology of thinking.

Thus, *M. M. Kashapov* [5], for example, provides arguments in support of the statement that the presence of opportunities of defining, researching and forming "pedagogical thinking", understood as a type of professional thinking, allows the subject to get to know the essence of pedagogical situations and to organize their pedagogical activities to their focused transformation, depending on the level of unfolding of the problems in solving pedagogical situations (situative and supersituative).

According to *G. Orme* [8], there are grounds, obtained as a result of numerous empiric researches, to accept that the so called "social thinking" also exists. This thesis is accepted also by other authors. Even *R.L. Thomdicke* [15] when he explains the essence and types of thinking defines it as a part of thinking as a whole. When clarifying it, he writes that it is expressed as "an ability of the individual to understand others and to act meaningfully in regard to the people around him" („способност на индивида да разбира другите и да действа смислено по отношение на обкръжаващите“) [15, p. 278]. The author notes that social thinking should become an important part of the development of the educative system. Interesting, however, is that this definition of social thinking, in its essence, to a great extent is analogous to the modern view of emotional thinking.

Utilizing the achievements of *R. L. Thomdicke* [15], the Australian psychologist *E. Dolle* [after: 8, p. 48] has developed a scale for measuring social maturity according to the common principles of thinking, through which he defines the social competency of a person. Taking some ideas from *A. Binet*, he introduces a "social coefficient – *SQ*", with which he marks the level of social maturity of the individual.

5. Emotional Thinking

Approximately at the same time, date the first studies on the problems, connected to the phenomenon of „*Emotional thinking*“.

As it was already stated above, on the basis of some of the achievements of the cited authors, and on the basis of his own research, *D. R. Caruso* [2] proposes one of the first definitions of the phenomenon of "Emotional thinking". According to him, this is "the ability for one to use their own emotions to solve personal problems, as well as to lead a more efficient way of life" („способността да се използват собствените емоции в качеството на помощ при решаване на личните проблеми, както и за водене на по-ефективен начин на живот“) [2, p. 243]. But it is overly

summarized and does not provide a full idea of its essence.

When researching the phenomenon “Emotional thinking”, we should consider the listed by *D. R. Caruso* [2] works of: *J. D. Mayer*, *R. Bar-On*, *R. Handley*, *B. Tredwel*, *R. Jacobs* and other authors, who have contributed significantly to its establishment as a scientific problem. In this way, for example, *P. Salovey* and *J. D. Mayer* [13], influenced by the works on the general problems of emotions and the roles of the processes of thinking in them, introduced the term “emotional thinking”. Initially, they defined it is an “ability to accurately and according to a given situation perceive, understand, define and identify emotions” („способност точно и съобразно дадена ситуация да се възприемат, разбират, определят и изясняват емоциите“). A bit later, they added to it, summarizing that this is an “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 action” („способност да се отразяват и да се различават някои собствени чувства и емоции при други хора, да се използва тази информация за ръководство на всяко мислене и действие“) [13, p. 180-201]. At the same time, the authors try also to provision the first scientific methodology for measuring the level of emotional thinking, continuing the line of research, outlined by *E. Dolle* with the introduction of *SQ* [after: 8]. Together with *D. R. Caruso* [2], *P. Salovey* and *J. D. Mayer* [13] started the work on tests for determining the level of emotional thinking.

Of the same time are the attempts of *Reuven Bar-On* to determine the coefficient of emotionality [after: 8]. In the research laboratory for emotional intelligence in Canada, he developed his own methodology for measuring the *EQ*. It is based on the definition of emotional thinking as a “set of emotional, personal and social skills of an individual to efficiently deal with the requirements and pressure of the surrounding environment” („съвкупност от емоционални, лични и социални способности на някого за ефективно справяне с изискванията и натиска на обкръжаващата среда“) [*Ibid.*, p. 98]. The author developed a questionnaire, consisting of 133 points, each of which is measured in a 5-degree scale. He introduced the “The Emotional Quotient Inventory” (EQ-i), published in 1997, with the help of which he measured the level of emotional thinking. He argued the conclusion that the “EQ-i reaches its culmination between 40 and 49 years of age, after which it becomes stagnant” [*Ibid.*, p. 108]. In the discussions, sparked from the created by the author methodology, assessed as pluses are: the extensive research base (it has been probated in Argentina, Canada, Chile, Germany; the research data has been gathered from a total of 22 countries, it has been published in 14 languages!), the check of the index of significance, the defining of “norms” for application.

On the other hand, however, a certain limitation in its usage has been noted, because the need of specially trained experimentators has been proven.

In the same year, *P. Salovey* and *J. D. Mayer* [13], independently from *R. Bar-On*, developed and introduced

the Multifactor Emotional Intelligence Scale (MEIS), which is focused on measuring the abilities of identifying, using and managing emotions. At its core, this is a written diagnostic test. The methodology of its usage is very simplified, it also allows ease of processing the received data, does not require special preparation of the experimentators and the experts for assessment.

Roughly during the same time, the book by *Daniel Goleman* “*Emotional Intelligence*” [4] appeared, followed by “*Working with Emotional Intelligence*”. On the basis of many scientific facts, the author arrived at a new clarification of the essence of the phenomenon “Emotional thinking”. According to him, this is a compound of mental skills, connected to knowledge of emotions, control over them and sensitivity to your own emotional states and those of other people. Above all, however, *D. Goleman*, assumes that it is a product of the “*emotional literacy*” of the individual, for which he makes an attempt to also theoretically explain its essence.

In 1998, *F. Wilks* [17] also reached the idea of the so called “emotional literacy”. According to the author, it requires a “close connection between feelings and mind” („тясна връзка между чувствата и разума“), “calling the emotions with their correct names” („назоваване на емоциите с точните им имена“) [17, p. 28], type of intelligence – understood as a good “self-understanding” of emotions, which leads to their more efficient and correct rationalization. The emotional literacy gives the opportunity for a greater sense of fulfillment, a possibility to put oneself “above emotions”, to understand the rational and intelligent basis of emotions. For this purpose, the authors states that, naturally, there is a necessity of knowledge and development of some specific skills.

A certain summary of the achievements in the attempts to explain the phenomenon as of the beginning of the 21st century is the book of *G. Orme* “*Emotional Intelligence*” [8]. Citing different authors, he reaches to the conclusion that emotional thinking is an ability, which allows the person to become “immersed” in emotions – their own, as well as the ones of the people, surrounding them, to understand and to perform the corresponding to them actions, and for this understanding to turn into knowledge about what we do in a certain emotional situation [8]. The expressed by the author opinion about the essence of emotional thinking at its core does not differ from the already mentioned ones, but in the cited work it has a significantly greater practical focus. In the comments, *Geetu Orme* extensively writes also about the especially great significance of studying the phenomenon of “Emotional thinking”.

6. Conclusions and Summaries

All of the above stated gives us reason to make the following *summarized conclusions* regarding the phenomenon “Emotional thinking”:

1. As a result of the numerous theoretical and experimental research works by different authors and the

obtained from them data, we can state that there is evidence enough to define, study and develop emotional thinking as a separate phenomenon.

2. Emotional thinking is expressed in the understanding and rationalization of actions initially of the own internal mechanisms of the person, after which begins the "reading" of the emotions of other people, and therefore as management of your own emotions and the emotions of other people in different life situations.

3. Many people, possessing an elevated potential for emotional thinking, cannot always perform an emotionally rationalized correct choice in a crisis situation. This implies that emotional thinking requires not only knowledge on what we have to do in those situation in order to perform it, but also adoption of the best measures for coping, when it is necessary. It affects the ability of taking decisions. The phenomenon reflects the relations between individuals.

4. An important part of understanding the phenomenon of "Emotional thinking" is to considering the need for it in the different individuals. This understanding has two aspects – on one side is the difference in the need for managing emotions, which depends on the professional specialization, on the degree and quality of the relations with other people, on the other hand – there are the differences, inherent to gender, since decisive evidence has already been presented that there exist certain differences between men and women.

5. Emotional thinking can be measured through the EQ-i. But the difference between cognitive intellect – IG, in which the highest levels are in the age of 17-18 years, after which its levels undergo minimal changes during the course of the whole active life of the individual and only in the elderliness it starts to decline; emotional EQ-i can change and increase in every age, depending on the acquired life experience.

6. The higher level of emotional thinking expands also the general level of intellect.

7. There is enough evidence to assume that it is possible to improve the level of emotional intelligence.

8. The needs of emotional intelligence in every person are different. Most often they depend on the attitudes of the person, the family surroundings, the friends circle and the relations with partners, the gender, as well as the professional orientation.

9. The two words describing the phenomenon are not mutually exclusive – emotional and thinking is not an oxymoron.

10. Emotional thinking is interconnected with some generally recognized scientific disciplines. Scientific arguments about the phenomenon still continue. Only during the last years, a scientific model of emotional consciousness has been created, which explains why what we do is mandated to a great degree by our emotions.

11. Emotional thinking is defined by the specific characteristics, which are needed in education and in work. Knowing and understanding its essence affects the level of learning the knowledge.

12. The phenomenon "Emotional thinking" still does not have an independent status. Some modern psychologies do

not even accept that is an independent phenomenon.

7. Area of Future Observations, Research and Theoretical Conclusions

Music is the language of feelings. But even its description suggest something more – a language, expressing the stages of mental processes in creation, as well as in perception, and in feelings, inspired by observations of the surrounding world and most powerfully from the emotional relation with it.

In this sense, the efforts of musical pedagogues could be focused on developing the systems of pedagogical technologies of modeling, managing and directing feelings – i.e. development of emotional thinking.

8. Conclusion

During the last decade, we witness a growing avalanche of events, which reflect the deficit of emotional communication; too often this leads to a growing emotional powerlessness.

But in spite of the already numerous scientific researches, emotions still remain one of the least researched psychic phenomenon, even though people constantly feel their effect in life, observe their external manifestations and their great significance in the life of other people, see how behavior is formed under their influence. To a great extent the nature, way of action and functions of emotions still remain unclear. Mostly what determines emotions and their psychophysiological basis has not yet been understood clearly enough. The outpour of current scientific research on emotions will probably provide an impulse also for the studies on the many psychic processes and events, connected to them.

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