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## Emotional Intelligence in the Works of Plato

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### Abstract

One of the most significant figures in Western philosophy is Plato, who developed the theory of the soul that profoundly influences the understanding of human nature and existence. According to Plato, the tripartite division of the soul consists of the logical (*logistikón*), the spirited (*thymoeides*), and the appetitive (*epithymetikon*), with emotion residing in the spirited part. Since ancient times, the connection between emotion and an individual's behavior has been evident, as seen in the Delphic maxim "know thyself" and the Platonic assertion that "the whole process of learning has an emotional basis." This work delves into the deep philosophical exploration of the foundations of emotional intelligence through the fundamental Platonic works *Republic*, *Phaedrus*, *Phaedo*, *Charmides*, *Alcibiades*, and *Gorgias*, demonstrating that the tripartite soul and "know thyself" constitute the primary foundation for its subsequent development.

**Keywords:** *Plato, Emotional Intelligence, Know Thyself, Soul*

## Introduction

In 1997, Goleman defined Emotional Intelligence as "the ability of an individual to recognize their own emotions and the emotions of others, to manage them effectively, and to create motivation for oneself."<sup>1</sup> Emotional intelligence is composed of four dimensions: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management. More specifically:

- Self-awareness-self-knowledge is the individual's ability to fully understand their own emotions, tendencies, needs, and predispositions.
- Self-management-self-regulation is the individual's ability to manage their emotions, to be flexible, and to direct their behavior towards the desired direction.
- Social awareness-empathy is the individual's ability to perceive the thoughts of others, even if they themselves do not feel the same.
- Relationship management is the individual's ability to successfully handle their interactions with other people and to elicit the desired responses.

Although the term emotional intelligence was formulated by Daniel Goleman in the 20th century, it preoccupied human thought much earlier, particularly in the philosophy of Plato. Through his analysis of the balanced soul and "know thyself," Plato lays the earliest foundations of emotional intelligence. In the Platonic works *Republic* and *Phaedrus*, the harmony of the soul through self-knowledge is examined as a prerequisite for the existence of virtue and happiness (eudaimonia). In the Platonic *Phaedo*, self-awareness is a fundamental prerequisite for a person to choose what is higher and toward the Good. In the Platonic *Alcibiades*, the value of self-knowledge and the importance of its acquisition are emphasized, while it is simultaneously revealed that its absence constitutes an obstacle to assuming power in the city. In *Charmides*, reference is made to the concept of sophrosyne (temperance), which contains the notion of self-knowledge and self-regulation. In *Gorgias*, Socrates' stance towards Callicles is

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<sup>1</sup> Goleman, D., *Emotional Intelligence*, Bantam Doubleday Dell Publishing Group Inc, United States: 1996.

characterized by all the elements that compose the definition of emotional intelligence. In the *Republic*, Plato divides the soul into three parts: the logical (reason), the spirited (emotions), and the appetitive (desires). The harmonization of the three parts of the soul, with the logical dominating the appetitive with the assistance of the spirited, leads to virtue and the creation of internal balance. The dominance of reason over desires, self-knowledge, and discipline are core values in Platonic philosophy and set the foundations of emotional intelligence.

The internal balance of a person and their ability to recognize and manage their emotions are of paramount importance for the moral integrity of the individual. Thus, the term emotional intelligence may not have been coined by the ancient philosopher Plato, but he laid the foundations for its creation because "the entire process of learning has an emotional basis."<sup>2</sup>

The purpose of this work is to highlight the concept of emotional intelligence through the Platonic works, thereby showcasing the diachronicity and philosophical significance of the term.

### **Emotional Intelligence in Plato's *Republic***

The *Republic* (or On Justice) is one of Plato's most important works, written approximately from 380 BC to 374 BC. This particular work influenced many areas of everyday life, such as philosophy and political theory<sup>3</sup>. Plato's *Republic* does not directly refer to the concept of emotional intelligence, but can be indirectly connected in three passages of the work. A first connection of emotional intelligence with the work *Republic* is through the tripartite division of the soul. In the *Republic*, the city has a threefold stratification of classes, resembling the tripartite division of the soul. The soul, as an immaterial element of the human being, is recognized by modern psychologists through its manifestations via the body. Understanding the concept of the soul is difficult; Plato

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<sup>2</sup> Dhani P. & Sharma T., "Emotional intelligence; History, models and measures", *International Journal of Science Technology and Management*, 5:7, 2016, pp. 189-201.

<sup>3</sup> Naddaf, G., "Poetic Myths of the Afterlife: Plato's Last Song", in Rick Berrinez and Keping Wang (eds.), *Reflections on Plato's Poetics*, Berrima: Academic Printing and Publishing, 2016, pp. 111-136.

resorts to myth and imagery because he does not refer to some form or Idea of the soul. In the *Republic*, he gives the tripartite description of the soul based on the development of his political theory concerning the ideal state, because the ideal state serves as an image-model of the soul<sup>4</sup>. The soul is divided into three parts: the logical (logistikon), which is the divine part of the soul; the spirited (thymoeides), which is the will and emotion; and the appetitive (epithymetikon), which includes all human desires<sup>5</sup>. The spirit is the helper in the effort of the logical to dominate the appetitive. If a person desires to be unified, their interiority must be characterized by balance and harmony. The internal harmony of the soul is achieved through the division of the soul into three parts, where the appetitive is subordinated to the logical<sup>6</sup>. The internal harmony of the soul as a balance between emotion and reason is a result of self-awareness and the management of emotions<sup>7</sup>. A second connection of emotional intelligence with the work *Republic* (or *On Justice*) is through the formulation of the concept of justice. Platonic justice presupposes the tripartite division of the human soul, parts which are paralleled with the three classes of the Platonic politeia (state). Justice as an ethical concept, with the balance of the three parts of the human soul under the rule of the logical, resembles the human capacity to control and manage their emotions to maintain balance<sup>8</sup>. Furthermore, if each part of the soul, like each person, attended to its own functions and emotions without interfering with those of others, then there would be balance and justice. Also, a person with empathy who understands their own emotions and those of others will be just in the city: "to do one's own business and not to be a busybody is justice"<sup>9</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup> Plato, *Republic*, Book IV, 435 e – 436 a.

<sup>5</sup> Plato, *Republic*, 440e, 441a.

<sup>6</sup> Triantari, S.A., *Ethics in decision-making*, Thessaloniki: K. M. Stamoulis-I. Harbandidis, 2021, pp. 7-8. Cf. Triantari, S., "From Coaching to Mentor Leader: Profile and Skills of the Mentor Leader in Human Resources Management", *Dia-noesis*, 15, 2024, pp. 103-22, <https://doi.org/10.12681/dia.38176>.

<sup>7</sup> Triantari, S.A., *LEADERSHIP THEORIES, From the Aristotelian Rhetorician to the modern Leader*. Thessaloniki: Harbandidis, 2020.

<sup>8</sup> Landauer, M., "What is constitutional in Platonic 'constitutional rule'? On Melissa Lane's of Rule and Office: Plato's Ideas of the Political". *History of European Ideas*, 50:6, 2024, pp. 1100–1102. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01916599.2024.2322843>

<sup>9</sup> Plato, *Republic*, 433a.

Finally, a third connection of emotional intelligence with the work *Republic* is in the seventh chapter, which discusses the Platonic allegory of the cave. The allegory of the cave involves a journey of self-knowledge. In the world of the cave, no prisoner distinguishes themselves from the others; there is no self-knowledge or knowledge of others, as they see only shadows of themselves and others. The ascent towards the light is a journey towards self-knowledge. The world of the cave depicts the soul's attachment to desires, resulting in mental confusion, disease, and imbalance of the three parts of the soul<sup>10</sup>. The harmonization of the three parts of the soul is the balance between the logical and the appetitive, through which a person, via the mind (nous), can recognize and manage their emotions. Self-awareness becomes the cornerstone of human existence because, through it, a person knows where they are, where they come from, and where they are going, and can relate to and manage their relationships with other people.

### Emotional Intelligence in Plato's *Phaedo*

Plato's *Phaedo* is one of his most important works because it refers to the trial and execution of Socrates, and his final thoughts on the immortality of the soul. In these dialogues, Plato focuses on the soul's liberation from desires, the dominance of the logical, and the search for truth by controlling emotions. In his final hours, Socrates speaks about the care of the soul and the need for a person to know their true nature<sup>11</sup>. In the *Phaedo*<sup>12</sup>, knowledge liberates the soul from fears, superstitions, delusions, and desires, enabling it to gaze upon the purely intelligible, freed from the tyranny of the body. Reason purifies the soul of every earthly element,

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<sup>10</sup> Leigh, F., *Self-Knowledge in Ancient Philosophy: The Eighth Keeling Colloquium in Ancient Philosophy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press USA - OSO, 2020, pp. 104-127.

<sup>11</sup>Ebrey, D., Plato's <I>*Phaedo*</I>: Forms, Death, and the Philosophical Life (1st ed.). Cambridge University Press, 2023. <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108787475>

<sup>12</sup> Plato, *Phaedo*, 82 c ff. Cf. Vavouras E., "The platonic proof of the immortality of the soul with three arguments: a) the argument of anamnesis, b) the argument of the opposites, c) the argument of similarity - *Meno* 80a-86c and *Phaedo* 70e-80e", *Dia-noesis: A journal of philosophy*, Issue 8, 2020, pp. 127-140.

brings it into contact with the divine and the intelligible elements, and protects it from all injustice, which latter removes the soul from its resemblance to God<sup>13</sup>. Plato tries to teach that rational order does not mean immorality and unbridled freedom, which is dominated by desires and pleasures, leading to the deviation of humans from the correct course of their lives. Rather, when the logical dominates the other two parts of the soul, it signifies commitment, limits, and order to unbridled pleasure. The ruling mind (nous), at every moment, knows every desire, every manifestation of the soul, and this knowledge of the self always leads it to the most advantageous choice, "the choice of the best"<sup>14</sup>. Self-awareness, therefore, is a fundamental prerequisite for a person to choose the higher and the Good, without being swept away by passions, because the study of death is a removal from impulses and an internal introspection.

### **Emotional Intelligence in Plato's *Phaedrus***

Plato's *Phaedrus* refers to dialogues between Socrates and his young student *Phaedrus* concerning love, rhetoric, and the immortality of the soul, and was written in his mature years around 386-367 BC.<sup>15</sup>. In the *Phaedrus*, he depicts the soul as a chariot with a charioteer and two horses, one noble and the other unruly. The noble horse represents will and noble emotions, while the bad horse represents desires and passions. The spirited part is the beautiful, white horse, which assists the charioteer in taming the unruly, black horse.<sup>16</sup>. In the myth of the *Phaedrus*, due to hubris and the charioteer's inability to tame the soul, the bad and intractable horse causes the soul to lose its wings, while the appetitive, through desires, weighs it down, and it falls towards the earth.<sup>17</sup>. The soul, being in an unstable state, unites with the body to acquire stability and cease wandering.<sup>18</sup>.

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<sup>13</sup> Plato, *Phaedo*, 106 b; *Republic*, Book IX, 609 b and 610 e – 611 a.

<sup>14</sup> Plato, *Phaedo*, 99 b.

<sup>15</sup> Ryan, P., *Plato's Phaedrus: A commentary for Greek readers*. University of Oklahoma press, 2012.

<sup>16</sup> Plato, *Phaedrus*, 246 a-b and 253 d.

<sup>17</sup> Plato, *Phaedrus*, 248 c.

<sup>18</sup> Plato, *Phaedrus*, 246 c.

In the case of the soul and the body, which are in constant conflict, if the unruly, black horse prevails, it destroys the chariot and the rider, and the soul loses its wings, because the charioteer and his horses constitute a single organism; therefore, both are saved or both are lost.<sup>19</sup> The unruly horse distorts everything and makes judgments arbitrarily, unable to attain true knowledge.

This allegory in the myth of the *Phaedrus* shows the need for internal balance and self-mastery, the regulation between reason and emotion—elements that compose emotional intelligence. In the Platonic *Phaedrus*, emotions assist in the harmony of the soul; the charioteer tries to tame the black horse, much like modern psychological thought strives not to suppress emotions but to understand them<sup>20</sup>.

### Emotional Intelligence in Plato's *Charmides*

Plato's *Charmides* belongs to the Socratic dialogues and deals with the concept of *sophrosyne* (temperance), which encompasses the notion of self-knowledge and self-restraint: "For I almost say that this is temperance: knowing oneself."<sup>21</sup>

In the *Charmides*<sup>22</sup> In the discussion about temperance, Socrates formally states that a person who possesses *sophrosyne* knows, in essence, what they know and what they do not know, because the awareness of knowledge is, in a way, knowledge of the self. When a person knows their emotions, they will act according to them. The individual's right actions, as moral actions towards others, make the individual happy (*eudaimon*) together with others. Conversely, what the individual does not know, they will not change

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<sup>19</sup> Belfiore, E., "Dancing with the Gods: The Myth of the Chariot in Plato's *Phaedrus*". *American Journal of Philology*, 127:2, 2006, pp. 185–217.

<sup>20</sup> Mauricio Garcia Dotto, P., "My dear *Phaedrus*, where is it you're going, and where have you come from": An Interpretation of the Opening Line of the *Phaedrus*. *Revista Archai*, 33, e03319, 2023, <https://doi.org/10.14195/1984-249X.33.19>

<sup>21</sup> Plato, *Charmides*, 164d.

<sup>22</sup> Chappell, S.G., *Humility among the ancient Greeks*. United Kingdom: Routledge, 2020.



their stance and disposition; they do not realize their situation, and will not proceed to actions and activities.<sup>23</sup>

According to Julia Annas<sup>24</sup>, in ancient Greek philosophy, *sophrosyne* has at least two meanings. *Sophrosyne* is defined both as self-control and as self-knowledge. Regarding the significance of self-knowledge, Annas emphasizes that it concerns knowledge of the individual's role in the social order and knowledge of their obligations towards others. Consequently, self-knowledge is formulated through three claims: a) self-knowledge is the essence of the virtue of *sophrosyne*, b) self-knowledge equates to the individual knowing their role in the social order, and c) knowledge of obligations towards others. Furthermore, regarding the aspect of emotional self-regulation and control, in the work *Charmides*, *sophrosyne* is also described as calmness and moderation: "[Critias] said that temperance seems to him to be doing everything in an orderly and quiet manner, both walking in the streets and conversing, and doing all other things likewise"<sup>25</sup>. In the *Charmides*, Plato does not use the term "emotional intelligence," but refers to *sophrosyne* as knowledge of the self, self-regulation, and internal balance.

### Emotional Intelligence in Plato's *Alcibiades*

Plato, in many of his works, refers to self-knowledge, with the most characteristic work for the concept "know thyself" being the dialogue *Alcibiades* I. In this work, Plato, through Socrates, identifies the concept of self-knowledge with knowledge of the soul: "It is the soul, then, which he bids us know—he who tells us to know ourselves"<sup>26</sup>. In his dialogue with *Alcibiades*, Socrates tries to teach the young man the value of self-knowledge; he tries to lead him to the realization that he knows nothing, since the very awareness

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<sup>23</sup> Moore, C., Plato's "*Charmides*." *Philosophical Review*, 134:2, 2025, pp. 203–208. <https://doi.org/10.1215/00318108-11676141>

<sup>24</sup> Annas, J., "*Self-knowledge in Early Plato*", *Platonic Investigations*, Washington, D.C.: "Catholic University of America Press", 1985, pp.123.

<sup>25</sup> Plato, *Charmides*, 159b.

<sup>26</sup> Plato, *Alcibiades* IX, 130e and Joosse, A., "Olympiodorus of Alexandria: Exegete, Teacher, Platonic Philosopher". *BRILL*, 2021. <https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004466708>

of ignorance constituted for Socrates a parameter of self-knowledge (Plato, *Alcibiades* I). Through this dialogue, the value of self-knowledge and the importance of its acquisition are highlighted, while it is simultaneously revealed that its absence constitutes an obstacle to assuming power in Athens<sup>27</sup>. (124b) "My dear fellow, believe me and the inscription at Delphi, 'Know thyself'—that our rivals are not these men whom you think, but we can only overcome them by care and skill." Furthermore, truth is connected to the process of self-knowledge. Agreement comes from both sides, however, through two negations with an affirmative function, with *Alcibiades* stating, "For my part, I am not lying"<sup>28</sup>, and Socrates replying, "Nor indeed am I"<sup>29</sup>. Another connection of emotional intelligence with the Platonic work *Alcibiades* is the relationship of the concept of self-knowledge through the seeing of one soul within another, and this is done through the example of the eyes. The philosopher analyzes that the part on which the soul must focus, if it wants to know the soul, is where the virtue of the soul exists, which is wisdom. This feature is the composite of knowledge and prudence (phronesis): "Can we say, then, that there is anything more divine in the soul than this, to which knowing and thinking belong?"<sup>30</sup>. This composite constitutes the center of the soul, just as the pupil constitutes the center of the eye, where the point of its virtue exists. The virtue of the soul is the characteristic that makes the individual resemble God. "Then this part of it resembles God, and whoever looks at this and comes to know all that is divine—God and wisdom—will thereby also best know himself"<sup>31</sup>. Based on the above, we manage to learn about ourselves by knowing God. Essentially, Socrates' proposal to *Alcibiades* is an erotic surrender of the young man's soul to his experienced teacher, who possesses virtue and self-knowledge and will

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<sup>27</sup> Plato, *Alcibiades* IX, 124b and Ambury, J. M., *Neoplatonic Pedagogy and the Alcibiades I: Crafting the Contemplative* (1st ed.). Cambridge Core, Cambridge University Press, 2024. <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009109963>

<sup>28</sup> Cf. *Alcibiades* IX, 124d.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. *Alcibiades* IX, 124d.

<sup>30</sup> *Alcibiades* IX, 133c. Caution is required here: "εἰδέναι" (to know) refers to knowledge of the "Form" (eidos) and thus is not identical to wisdom (sophia) or prudence (phronesis).

<sup>31</sup> *Alcibiades* IX, 133c.

help the young man to introspect on his soul<sup>32</sup>. It is a relationship between beloved (eromenos) and lover (erastes), where each participant becomes the eye within which the other will be mirrored, on the precondition of the unconditional acceptance of one by the other. In this way, *Alcibiades* will become a partaker of virtue through the mutual equality between the two. Socrates is the lover, through whom the virtue of self-knowledge will be transmitted to *Alcibiades*. Through this process, the body will be subordinated to the superior soul, and this will result in the acquisition of those necessary provisions for *Alcibiades* to engage with the political affairs of the city. Through seeing one soul within another, done through the example of the eyes, one encounters virtue, introspects their own soul, and learns about themselves. These elements compose the definition of emotional intelligence.

### Emotional Intelligence in Plato's *Gorgias*

The Platonic work *Gorgias* constitutes a fundamental work of political and ethical philosophy. It is reputed to have been written approximately between 387 BC and 380 BC. At its core lies the conflict between rhetoric and philosophy, between power and justice<sup>33</sup>. The concept of emotional intelligence can be traced through Socrates' dialogues, from the way he manages desires, conflicts, and his stance on the care of the soul.

Plato's *Gorgias* is a work where the limits of human ethics are tested. Emotional intelligence becomes the criterion of authenticity, the touchstone that distinguishes the rhetorician from the philosopher, the powerful from the happy (eudaimon), Calicles from Socrates. In Plato, the Lydian stone is used metaphorically as a symbol for testing truth and morality. Plato refers to the Lydian

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<sup>32</sup> The educational relationship proposed here can be represented by the analogy 1:1. It should be noted, however, that the education here concerns virtue. In this case, the multitude cannot meet the necessity, so with these references, the answer is given to what was discussed in section 110 ff., where the discussion focused on the concept of "justice." Proclus in his comments on this dialogue develops the issue extensively. For an approach to this Proclean interpretation of the aforementioned Platonic passage and the role the multitude plays in learning justice, see J. Mintoff, «Did *Alcibiades* Learn Justice from the Many», *Alcibiades and the Socratic Lover-Educator*, pp. 90-106.

<sup>33</sup> Dodds, E. R., *Plato: Gorgias*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1959.

stone, which was a special rock used to assay the content of gold or silver through rubbing and examining the marks<sup>34</sup>.

Specifically, Plato mentions the Lydian stone at the point in the dialogue where Socrates argues that rhetoric, although it can be a powerful art, must be used for the good and the truth. The Lydian stone serves as a standard of comparison to distinguish good from evil, true virtue from its counterfeit, just as gold is distinguished from other metals. Therefore, the "Lydian stone" in the *Gorgias* symbolizes ethics and truth, and serves to judge the quality of rhetoric. In the *Gorgias*, such a moment is the clash between Socrates and Callicles.<sup>35</sup>, where Socrates is called upon to confront a soul unrestrained by desires.

Callicles is a prime example in philosophy of the contemptuous challenging of conventional morality. Callicles defends hedonism, the dominance of the strong, and denounces the virtue of justice as an artificial brake on self-interest and a deception that intelligent people should see through<sup>36</sup>.

From Callicles' stance, the elements of emotional intelligence are absent; he extols hedonism, power, and imposition.

483c-d: "That is the reason why it is said to be wrong and shameful by law (nomos) to seek to have more than the many, and they call this 'doing wrong'. But nature herself, in my opinion, shows that it is just for the better to have more than the worse, and the more powerful than the less powerful."

491e-492a: "[Callicles says] that the man who is to live rightly should allow his own desires to be as great as possible and not restrain them, and that through courage and intelligence (phronesis) he should be capable of ministering to them when they are at their greatest, and of satisfying every appetite with whatever it desires."

498d: "Don't you realize that you say the good are good by the presence of good things, and the bad are bad by the presence of bad things? And that the good things are the pleasures, and the bad things the pains? "

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<sup>34</sup> Vavouras, E., *Plato, Gorgias: The Right of the most powerful in ancient Greek thought*, Thessaloniki: Zitros, 2008, p. 519.

<sup>35</sup> Vavouras, E., *Plato, Gorgias: The Right of the most powerful in ancient Greek thought*, Thessaloniki: Zitros, 2008, pp. 217-260.

<sup>36</sup> Kamtekar, R., "The Profession of Friendship: Callicles, Democratic Politics, and Rhetorical Education in Plato's *Gorgias*", *Ancient Philosophy*, 2005.

Furthermore, regarding the thorough examination of the soul, a person must have three qualities to live in an orderly and adapted manner: knowledge (episteme), goodwill (evnoia), and frankness (parrhesia). Socrates discerned in Callicles these qualities that set him apart from the masses and even from great political orators, elements that make him a touchstone.<sup>37</sup> But Callicles represents immoral behavior as a new morality.<sup>38</sup>, because according to Socrates and Plato, Callicles is wrong regarding the content he gives to human nature, to intelligence, virtue, and the good, regarding the meaning of political power, and also regarding the purpose of the superior man<sup>39</sup>.

Conversely, Socrates advocates for the control of desires<sup>40</sup>, sets the care of the soul as the ultimate goal<sup>41</sup>, insists that justice and temperance (sophrosyne) lead to happiness (eudaimonia), and shows empathy to "heal" Callicles—all these elements are recognized today as high-level emotional intelligence. Socrates argues that philosophy is the art of internal harmony and that a life without virtue is like a leaky jar, a soul full of cracks in which nothing can be retained; the soul becomes insatiable and unstable<sup>42</sup>, elements that show emotional immaturity and a lack of emotional self-regulation.

Plato's *Gorgias* is indeed a philosophical laboratory where the boundaries of good and evil are tested. Emotional intelligence is not merely a tool, but the Lydian Stone. Emotional intelligence, as the Lydian Stone, distinguishes the just and happy person from the powerful but morally poor one, where the ability to manage desires, emotions, and relationships is absent—elements that compose the definition of emotional intelligence.

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<sup>37</sup> Vavouras, E., *Plato, Gorgias: The Right of the most powerful in ancient Greek thought*, Thessaloniki: Zitros, 2008, p. 318.

<sup>38</sup> Woolf, R., "*Callicles and Socrates: Psychic (Dis)harmony in the Gorgias*", Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy, 2000.

<sup>39</sup> Doyle, J., "The Fundamental Conflict in Plato's *Gorgias*", Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy, 30, 2006, pp. 87–100. Cf. Futter D., "Lear on Irony and Socratic Method", *Conatus - Journal of Philosophy*, 8 (1), 2023, pp. 111–126. <https://doi.org/10.12681/cjp.31045>.

<sup>40</sup> Plato, *Gorgias*, 503c.

<sup>41</sup> Plato, *Gorgias*, 513d-e.

<sup>42</sup> Dodds, E.R., *Plato: Gorgias*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1959.

## **"Know Thyself"**

Socrates prioritized self-knowledge, inspired by the Delphic maxim "Know Thyself." Socrates does not stop at the oracle's pronouncements but seeks to discover the truth. In all of Plato's dialogues, the problem of self-awareness is raised. Plato's purpose is for the listener and reader to take an active part in the whole process, so that each one draws their own personal conclusions; this is why many of his dialogues do not end with a clear conclusion. Socrates forces his interlocutor to think and position themselves on a completely different, philosophical level, which is beyond ordinary daily conversation. Interaction with Socrates is a true philosophical and experiential quest. The person questions the purpose of their life, its origin, and its destiny. Plato does not provide specific answers; the only thing he offers is the method of dialectic, which can lead a person to know and make their own decisions with certainty. G. Reale considers self-awareness and the care of the self (*epimeleia eautou*) to be prominent pillars of his philosophy, centered on the study of man<sup>4343</sup>. A person who is ignorant of themselves cannot improve in anything, because they cannot know what they are called to improve. A person's stance in real life moves them to acquire knowledge about themselves. Self-awareness is the cornerstone of Plato's philosophy, with the result that self-awareness, as an act, significantly influences the entire being of the human. Self-awareness constitutes the beginning and the end of philosophy. The prisoner cannot leave the cave without self-awareness<sup>4444</sup>. The examination of the soul must be continuous because conditions change over time, and the person needs to reposition themselves in relation to them. However, the person who chooses the care of the body is subjugated to various desires and pleasures, resulting in a corresponding life full of tyranny and injustice. The pure state of the soul is intellection (*noesis*), and pure knowledge is the knowledge of the intelligible and the Ideas. Pure knowledge is achieved through dialectic, as the final stage of education for the acquisition of virtue. C. Griswold states that self-knowledge cannot exist without the existence of the

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<sup>43</sup> Reale, G., *Socrate, Alla Scoperta Della Sapienza Umana*. Milano: Rizzoli, 2013.

<sup>44</sup> Plato, *Republic*, Book VII, 514 a ff.

Idea of the soul, because, since the Ideas provide the possibility of pure knowledge, a person without the existence of the Idea could not know their soul and themselves<sup>45</sup>. The care of the soul has the consequence that the person awakens the souls of their fellow humans, so that all may live a happy life (bios eudaimon) in the city and return to the land of the blessed after the end of this life. Socrates "'know thyself" constitutes the cornerstone of emotional intelligence; the individual perceives their emotions as soon as they are born within them. Psychologists use the term self-awareness instead of "know thyself," meaning the individual's constant attention to their internal states<sup>46</sup>. The Delphic maxim "know thyself" means the full knowledge and deep understanding of the human's psychic and intellectual state: "It is the soul, then, which he bids us know—he who tells us to know ourselves"<sup>47</sup>. It is a process of the individual's conscious penetration into their own interiority.

## Conclusions

1. Although emotional intelligence was formulated in the 20th century, its roots lie in Platonic philosophy. Plato did not separate the mind from the soul but believed that true knowledge is created by the harmony between the logical, the spirited (emotions), and the appetitive. The theory of the tripartite division and harmony of the soul in Plato's *Republic* constitutes the ancient basis for the recognition and management of emotions. Furthermore, the balance between reason and emotions is achieved by a just person distinguished by self-knowledge, self-control (enkrateia), and internal balance—core values of emotional intelligence.

2. In the Platonic work *Phaedo*, Socrates faces the topic of death with composure because he pursues self-knowledge; he exhibits emotional self-regulation and empathy through the guidance of rational order towards the immortality of the soul.

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<sup>45</sup> Griswold, C., *Self-Knowledge in Plato's Phaedrus*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986, pp. 2-3, 7, 43.

<sup>46</sup> Goleman, D., *Emotional Intelligence*, 25th Anniversary Edition, London: Bloomsbury, 2020.

<sup>47</sup> *Alcibiades IX*, 130e.

3. The allegory in the *Phaedrus* myth demonstrates the need for internal harmony and self-mastery, balancing reason and emotion—elements that compose emotional self-regulation.

4. Temperance (sophrosyne) in the *Charmides* is also a central Platonic virtue because it refers to the understanding of one's own emotions and those of others; that is, sophrosyne refers to empathy. Sophrosyne is also referred to as moderation, self-restraint (engrateia), which helps a person manage their emotions and do what is right. Empathy and emotional control are basic skills of emotional intelligence.

5. In the Platonic *Alcibiades*, the concept of self-knowledge is identified with the knowledge of the soul. One encounters virtue, introspects their own soul, and learns about oneself through seeing one's soul within another, illustrated by the metaphor of the eyes.

6. In the *Gorgias*, emotional intelligence resembles a Lydian Stone that distinguishes the just and happy person from the powerful but morally deficient person, where the ability to manage desires, emotions, and relationships is absent—elements that compose the definition of emotional intelligence. Socrates advocates for the control of passions, places supreme emphasis on the care of the soul, and insists that justice and temperance lead to happiness; finally, he shows empathy to "heal" Callicles. All the above elements are recognized in our time as markers of high emotional intelligence.

7. Furthermore, a basic skill of emotional intelligence is encapsulated in the maxim "know thyself." The saying "Know Thyself," found at the entrance of the Delphic oracle, constitutes the supreme expression and foundation of self-knowledge. Self-knowledge, therefore, arises from the cultivation of the soul, which is the seat of the cognitive functions and of human action toward truth, prudence (phronesis), and knowledge of the self.

Emotional intelligence is thus directly related to the Platonic idea in the modern era because it concerns the profound awareness of one's own emotions and those of others, coupled with the effort for conscious action. The goal of emotional intelligence and "know thyself" is the harmonization of the individual's inner world with the attainment of a virtuous and happy life within society.





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