Can Academia Escape the Allegory of Plato's Cave?
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Note: further logic, arguments, citations, and references for claims made in the following essay can be found in my technical paper, *Cognitive-Emotional Re-Processing Control, Cultivation, and Education: The Linguistic Semantics of Cognitive vs. Emotional Dysregulation;* a free PDF download available from https://symbioticpsychology.com/. This essay, as are all my writings, are not written with AI.

"Whatever may be the limitations which trammel inquiry elsewhere, we believe that the great state University of Wisconsin should ever encourage that continual and fearless sifting and winning by which alone the truth can be found."
Sifting and Winnowing Plaque on Bascom Hall

(1) Our Culture of Emotionally Driven Behavior

Have you seen Disney's "*Inside Out"* movies, a story within the mind of Riley where personified emotions manage her thoughts and actions? Our primary, secondary, and collegiate language, literacy, and literary educators are teaching this psychology of "emotionally driven behavior" as inscribed by Homer's *"Iliad"* nearly 3000 years-ago:

"Goddess, sing me the anger of Achilles, Peleus' son, that fatal anger that brought countless sorrows on the Greeks and sent many valiant souls of warriors down to Hades, leaving their bodies as spoil for dogs and carrion birds: for thus was the will of Zeus brought to fulfilment" (Homer, 800-700/2009).

Achilles' anger brought countless sorrows upon the Greeks. Achilles' anger sent many valiant souls to Hades. Homer inscribes the emotion of anger as causal; that is, anger is the cause of Achilles' behavior. This literary linguistic paradigm of "emotionally driven behavior" demands emotional regulation, management, and control by the cognitive mind (and even with the use of pharmaceuticals) because dangerous emotions can drive destructive behavior. Controlling emotional behavior by changing cognitive activities of the mind (such as thoughts, memories, beliefs, imaginings, perceptions, and reasonings) forms the basis of today's well-researched and evidenced based cognitive behavior modification therapies.

Because of neurogenesis and neuroplasticity of the brain, as individuals (and future psychological academics) learn the emotional linguistics within language and literature, their brains become "hard-wired" and neurolinguistically programmed with usage. Have a person's core beliefs of emotions – which may have been neurolinguistically molded from childhood through family interactions and, in later years, through reading and comprehending literary works such as Dickens's Great Expectations, Poe's The Raven, and Austen's Pride and Prejudice – impacted their current understanding of emotions and cognition? A shared cultural and linguistic development of core beliefs and conceptual understandings about emotions is required for young students to comprehend and follow the emotional twists and turns within these famous English literary works. As students mature and are introduced to the more advanced pieces of Shakespeare, Tolstoy, Dostoevsky, and others, comprehension is even more dependent upon the prior assimilation of cultural and linguistic paradigms. Conceptions of emotions are further reinforced by the logic and reason applied in today's scientific literature, research, and discussions about emotions.

The Tao of yin and yang comes from the movement of shadow and light on a mountain as the sun moves across the sky throughout the day. This symbiotic dance of light and shadow is also the dance of male (yang) and female (yin) where yang represents the masculine mind, and yin represents the feminine emotions. Thus, within our western language and linguistics of emotionally driven behavior taught within academic sports psychology is a very sexist language of dangerous and aberrant "feminine" emotions that must be controlled, regulated, and managed, by the "masculine" cognitive mind. (reference *Destructive Emotions, How Can We Overcome Them"* (2003), Dalai Lama and Daniel Golemann; and the Association for Applied Sports Psychology and their certification of mental toughness training for both boys and girls: (https://appliedsportpsych.org/members/newsletters/september-2018/developing-and-fostering/)

I propose that like the citizens of Plato's Cave, our professors and academic culture have only witnessed the shadows of emotional behavior projected on a wall and not only have they never been exposed to a different paradigm of cognitive-emotional behavior, that when they are presented with another archetype of emotional behavior, because of neurogenesis and neuroplasticity, it would only be gibberish and incomprehensible. After a lifetime of study, research, publication and teaching within the paradigm of emotional driven behavior and cognitive control, would acknowledging another archetype be neurolinguisticly possible?

(2) Emotional Evolution

Missing from our 3000-year-old linguistics of emotionally driven behavior is human evolution. Evolution… survival of the fittest, strongest, most able to pass on their genetic prowess to the next generation. Imagine a prehistoric humanoid surviving the dangers and hazards found within the savannahs of Africa to hunt and gather food, shelter, and the basic necessities to stay alive. What has a greater chance of survival, (1) an emotionally feeling-good correlation with a healthy, balanced physiology of the brain and body conducive to health, well-being, and successful decision-making, or (2) an emotionally feeling-good correlation with an unhealthy, imbalanced physiology of the brain and body susceptible to illness, injury, and poor decision-making ability? Or a modern-day example… What is the likelihood of success when an emotionally good-feeling drunk stumbles into his car to drive across town during rush hour traffic to buy groceries for his family?

Therefore, emotionally good-feeling cognitive behavior (such as thoughts, memories, beliefs, imaginings, perceptions, and reasonings) correlates with a well-balanced physiology of strength, power, agility, and stamina of the brain and body conducive to health, well-being, and successful decision-making prowess. And emotionally bad-feeling cognitions correlate with an imbalanced physiology of weakness, disempowerment, and frailty of the brain and body susceptible to illness, injury, and poor decision-making. Emotional awareness becomes critical in attaining and maintaining physiological strength and conditioning and knowing how an athlete will respond physically and mentally in competition.

Emotion's evolutionary role has not been integrated into modern psychology's paradigm of emotionally driven behavior that demands emotional control by the cognitive mind. Every writer since Homer reflects the emotional linguistic psychology of his *"Iliad"* and millions of years of cognitive-emotional evolution have been (and are being) linguistically redefined and sabotaged by our language and literary institutions. Emotions have a very significant evolutionary function that is weakened by today's psychology of emotional control, regulation, and management, even with the use of pharmaceuticals if deemed necessary. (Note: pharmaceuticals do have a very necessary therapeutic function… when incorporated with emotional evolution awareness.)

Instead of mental toughness training to tolerate physical pain and ignore emotional awareness, a world class athlete must develop the mental discipline to utilize their emotional awareness to facilitate and to re-focus off emotionally bad-feeling cognitions and onto emotionally good-feeling cognitions that correlate with a strong, powerful, and balanced physiology conducive to health, well-being, and successful decision-making prowess.

Emotions have evolved, not to be controlled, but to guide cognitive behavior towards health, well-being, and success through cognitive reprocessing with emotional awareness. This is similar to cognitive behavior modification therapeutics, but with the caveat that emotionally feeling-good or -bad awareness is in itself the primary source of guidance. Physiologically speaking, emotionally good-feeling cognitive behaviors are good. And emotionally bad-feeling cognitive behaviors are bad… physiologically speaking. The personal and social ramifications noted here are addressed in another discussion on education (reference*: Cognitive-Emotional Health Education: A Primary and Secondary School Overview* (2025) Jackson, A.O.)

(3) Feminine Emotional Body Guiding the Masculine Cognitive Mind.

Emotional awareness has evolutionary significance. Emotions are integral to a natural, operant conditioning mechanism, similar to pain, to guide an individual off emotionally bad-feeling (unhealthy and physiologically imbalanced) cognitive behavior susceptible to illness, accidents, and poor decision-making prowess and onto emotionally good-feeling (healthy and physiologically balanced) cognitive behaviors conducive to physical, strength and empowerment and mental, successful decision-making prowess.

Emotional awareness is similar to perceiving the instruments on the dash of a car. They inform the driver of mechanical conditions within the vehicle where lack of awareness or response can result in catastrophic failure (i.e. mental illness). Another analogy would be "burnt hand disorder" where the biochemical signature of an emotional disorder, say depression, is similar to a burnt hand left on a hot stove. The biochemical signature of a psychological depression is not the result of an emotional disorder but of an ignorance and failure of an individual to respond to their own emotional pain and get their brain's bad-feeling cognitive activity off the proverbial "hot stove". The abnormal biochemical signatures within psychological disorders are supposed to exist when the mind is continually dwelling upon that which is not wanted.

It is the cognitive mind that must be controlled, regulated, and managed through emotional awareness. Good-feeling emotions have an evolved correlation with a strong, balanced, and robust physiology conducive to health, well-being, and successful decision-making. Bad-feeling emotions have an evolved correlation with a weak, impotent, and unhealthy physiology susceptible to illness, sickness, accidents, and poor decision-making. Developing the evolutionary harmony between a warrior's mind, body, emotions, and awareness through a symbiotic psychology creates a physically stronger, faster, and more powerful warrior that is mentally more agile, cunning, and has a greater capacity for successful decision-making.

(Note: I can hear an objection with the "good feelings" of unhealthy manic behavior. Has there been any research on a thesis that this mania is a result of suppression and dissociation of emotionally bad-feeling cognitions associated within the prefrontal cortex and an executive function to guide cognitive behavior? Disassociation from emotionally bad-feeling cognitions would null an evolved cognitive-emotional guidance mechanism that would limit unhealthy behavior. This leads to the question, "Why and how was the awareness of these emotionally bad-feeling cognitions so suppressed that they became non-functional?" Also, within this paradigm of emotional awareness guiding cognitive activities, lies a necessary moral and ethical education within our institutions… having a new bike may feel good but stealing one has both individual and societal ramifications… to use one of many examples.)

(4) Emotional Awareness and Response for Athletic Success

Modern sports psychology and its literary linguistics of emotional behavior within meditation, mindfulness, and mental toughness… where emotional awareness and response are moderated… are convoluting an individual's understanding of their own evolved symbiotic relationship between mind, body, emotions, and awareness for self-empowerment. If emotional awareness and response is necessary to maintain physiological health and well-being, and successful decision-making prowess, what happens within the sports psychology of mental toughness training and emotional control, management, and regulation, even with pharmaceuticals, if necessary, where emotional awareness and response to guide cognitive behavior is diminished? Regulation, control, and management of "dangerous emotions" are also prevalent in meditation and mindfulness practices where an athlete is taught not to respond to their thoughts and emotions, but as I was taught, to let them float by without attachment, like a cloud floats by in the sky.

University of Wisconsin Sports Psychology works closely with Prof. Richard Davidson who is founder and director of the Center for Healthy Minds. "He is best known for his groundbreaking work studying emotion and the brain. A friend and confidante of the Dalai Lama is a highly sought after expert and speaker, leading conversations on wellbeing on international stages…." Prof. Davidson's lifetime of meditation and close ties to the Dalai Lama reflect his beliefs in aberrant and dangerous emotions that must be controlled, regulated, and managed, by the cognitive mind (reference: *"Destructive Emotions, How Can We Overcome Them"* (2003), Dalai Lama and Daniel Golemann; and

the Association for Applied Sports Psychology and their certification to "enhance mental toughness" which typically entails emotional control, regulation, and management.

Three important notes here: (1) The Dalai Lama is a monk, teaching pacifism, (2) One of the foundational teachings of the Buddha is that desire is the cause of suffering and that to be free of suffering one must free of desire. (3) Meditation, mindfulness, viuand emotional control are traditions to eliminate suffering and emotional bondage. But an athlete in sports competition is about being a warrior with wants, desires, and intentions to succeed and to be victorious. Do you see a conflict of interest here? Meditation, mindfulness, and mental toughness have demonstratable proven athletic success. The how's and why's of this success is attained is not within the guise of mental-emotional conflict and control but must be explored within the context of the symbiotic harmony between mind, body, emotions, and awareness. The success of meditation, mindfulness, and mental toughness training can even be enhanced within another paradigm and linguistics of cognitive-emotional behavior (reference: YouTube video manuscript of *"The Tao of Athletic Success Workout" SP 1st Contact Presentation"* (2025) Jackson, A.O., free PDF download available from; https://symbioticpsychology.com/).

Meditation, mindfulness, and mental toughness training, as within any therapeutic psychology, can have unintentional side effects. I personally after years of unsupervised meditation, mindfulness, and mental toughness training ended up psychotic in a mental hospital. I suffered over fifteen years of psychotic mania, suicidal depression with schizophrenic tendencies before I stimulated the evolved symbiotic harmony within my own cognitive-emotional behavior and regained my biochemical, neurological, and physiological health and well-being to live a "normal" life without psychiatric and psychological disabilities and therapeutics. Even with proper supervision, individuals have suffered unintended consequences of meditation, mindfulness, and mental toughness training.

University of Wisconsin long distance running prodigy, Sarah Shultze (2000-2022) committed suicide under the supervision of Wisconsin's mental health and sports psychology institutions. Prof. Willoughby Britton of the Clinical and Affective Neuroscience Laboratory, Warren Alpert Medical School of Brown University has founded "Cheetah House", whose statement of intent is: "We exist to provide evidence-based information and support to individuals who have experienced negative effects from meditation; experienced unhealthy meditation or spiritual communities; and suffered religious & spiritual abuse or trauma. We aim to empower meditators, meditation teachers, & clinicians to make informed decisions around contemplative practices" (https://www.cheetahhouse.org/).

Because *"The Tao of Athletic Success Workout"* utilizes the importance of modern scientific emotional and physiological evolution where good- and bad-feeling emotional awareness is used to manage and to prevent neurological, biochemical, and physiological imbalances necessary for psychological instability, I have a built in safe-guard to prevent the unintended consequences found within modern sport's psychology meditation, mindfulness, and mental toughness training programs. But the very unfortunate truth is that Prof. Davidson and Dr. David Lacocque, PsyD, Director of University of Wisconsin's Mental Health & Sport Psychology, refuse to even discuss with me the

potential harmful effects ingrained in their programs and any possible remedies that I may offer. As I offer contradictory evidence to the "truths" of their personal beliefs, I am "persona non grata".

(5) Is Another Paradigm of Emotional Behavior Conceptually Possible?

Primary school students are introduced to the basic psychology of human behavior within the "cognitive triangle" that illustrates the interplay between thoughts, emotions, and behavior and how one effects the other within their language and literacy education (ref: "*The Resilience Workbook for Kids*", Baruch-Feldman and Comizio). ***But is our 300-year-old language and literary linguistics of emotionally driven behavior a shortcut that fails to properly incorporate the modern science of human physiology?***

Has psychology properly researched the basic hypothesis and foundation of human behavior that "emotions drive behavior"? Well researched and evidenced based cognitive behavior therapies (CBT) use the interrelationships between mind, emotions, and behavior within a cognitive triangle. CBT focuses on the mind-emotion-behavior directional relationship and mantra… "change your thoughts, which change your emotions, and therefore behavior can be modified". CBT psychology has proven the 3000-year-old paradigm of emotionally driven behavior. Or has it?

Walking through the woods, I see scratches on a tree. I then perceive something in the bushes that I conceive to be a bear. When I get closer, I understand that not only is it a bear, but a mother bear with two cubs and I recall how aggressive mother bears can be from nature videos found on YouTube. I now believe myself to be in danger. Now… after all this cognitive activity of knowing and awareness… then the physiological changes and states within the brain and body are precipitated to activate my fearful fight, flight, or freeze behavior response.

Technically, from an engineering vantage, human behavior is driven by neurological, biochemical, and physiological changes and states of being in the brain and body. The brain is a highly advanced, biological processor, and lead orchestrator of these changes, states, and flow of our biochemical, neurological, and physiological being that drives behavior. What moves the body, what makes the hand that strikes the ball, are changes and states of physiology orchestrated by a highly sophisticated and complex neurological brain. (Reflexive behavior is addressed in my technical paper, "*Cognitive-Emotional Re-Processing Control, Cultivation, and Education: The Linguistic Semantics of Cognitive vs. Emotional Dysregulation"* which is freely available as a PDF from my website, https://symbioticpsychology.com/.

(6) Returning to Plato's Cave of "Emotionally Driven Behavior"

Now, the key question, what precipitates these changes and states of physiological being that drive behavior? 3000 years of emotional linguistics says emotions drive behavior. Which means emotions precipitate the changes and states of physiological being in the brain and body that drive behavior. This is "reaffirmed" within well proven and evidenced based cognitive behavior modification

therapies which means, simply stated, “change your thoughts and you change your emotions… and your emotionally driven behavior”.

What is missing from the mind, emotion, and behavior cognitive triangle is today’s pharmacological research into changes and states of physiological being within the brain and body. That is, changes and states of neurological, biochemical, and physiological being within the brain and body drive human behavior. “Emotionally driven” behavior means that emotions must precipitate these changes in physiology that drives behavior. But as in the bear analogy demonstrates, these changes in physiology are necessary for the perception of emotions. How can emotions be causal to changes in physiology that drives behavior and also be the perceptual effect of theses changes of physiology. Are emotions cause or effect?

If emotions change the physiology that drives behavior and this behavior driving physiology is also perceived as emotions, emotions are both cause and effect of the same phenomenon (changes in physiology). Emotions cannot be both causal to these changes and states of physiology and a perceived effect of these changes. I have read some very convoluted and complex re-defining of “emotions”, “emotional states” vs. “emotional perception” to avoid this conflict. But there is a vast simpler and superior Occam's Razor.

Can I have my fight, flight, or freeze behavior without any changes in physiology? No. Can I have the perception of emotions without changes in physiology? No. Then my question is, what is causal to these necessary changes and states in physiology of the brain and body that drive behavior and are perceived as emotions? Could my cognitive behavior itself be causal to these changes in physiology that 1) drives behavior and 2) are perceived as emotions? The emotion fear must come after the cognitive activities of awareness and knowing of the bear. Could the emotion fear be the perception of changes and states of physiology in the brain and body and therefore emotion is a perceptual corollary effect rather than causal?

From a mechanical engineering perspective, emotions don’t drive behavior, changes and states of physiology drive behavior. Emotions are the perception of this physiology. It is mental activities (such as thoughts, memories, beliefs, imaginings, perceptions, and reasoning of meeting a bear in the woods) that precipitate the changes and states of neurology, biochemistry, and physiology in the brain and body that drives behavior.

Today’s behavioral and pharmacological science has plenty of experimental evidence diagramming the biochemical, neurological, and physiological changes, states, and flow between behavior and physiology. But when, cognitive activities of the mind (such as thoughts, memories, beliefs, imaginings, perceptions, and reasonings) come first, then we have changes and states of physiological being that drive behavior and are perceived as emotions. Cognition precipitates the changes and states of biochemical, neurological, and physiological being in the brain and body that drive behavior. And it is these changes in physiology that are also perceived as emotions. Cognition is causal, emotions are a perceived, corollary effect. (Reference “*Cognitive-Emotional Re-Processing Control,*

Cultivation, and Education: The Linguistic Semantics of Cognitive vs. Emotional Dysregulation" which is freely available as a PDF from my website, https://symbioticpsychology.com/.)

(6) Integrating a Symbiotic Psychology into Our Culture of Emotional Manipulation and Suppression

Bruce Lee famously said in "Enter the Dragon", ***"…we need emotional content…. Don't think. Feel."*** How can an athlete feel and have emotional content within today's academic mental toughness, meditation, and mindfulness training that inhibits evolutionary emotional awareness and response? The University of Wisconsin's sports psychology is based on a language and literary linguistics of "emotionally driven behavior" inscribed in Homer's "Iliad" nearly a 3000-year-ago. Ever since Achilles' fatal rage brought countless sorrows upon the Greeks, feminine aberrant and dangerous emotions that drive destructive behavior must be controlled by the "superior" masculine cognitive mind.

Yes, we must continue our language and linguistic education of emotionally driven behavior and control to understand, comprehend, and to learn from our past 3000 years of literature, poetry, art, music, religion, law, philosophy and social behavior. In addition, our educational system must integrate a symbiotic psychology where mind, body, and emotional awareness have evolved to empower, strengthen, and to free an individual imprisoned within the a masculine cognitive language and emotional linguistics found within our world academics, governments, and religions designed to suppress our feminine emotional awareness and guidance.

The linguistic structures of emotionally driven behavior and control exist in our language of entertainment, science, medicine, sociology, religion, politics, and laws of crime and punishment where hate crimes and crimes of passion have their own classifications. The logistics of an inferior feminine emotional body that must be controlled by a superior masculine mind to discipline a subservient population has been passed down from generation to generation for the last 3000 years, as the **"*will of God brought to fulfillment*"** (Homer).

The time has come for humanity to realize that the masculine mind and feminine emotions have evolved in symbiotic harmony to work together in cooperation. The cognitive mind has not evolved to control, manage, and regulate emotions. The cognitive mind must integrate with emotional awareness to understand the physiological health and well-being, or absence thereof, precipitated in the brain and body by its thoughts, memories, beliefs, imaginings, perceptions, and reasonings. Our educational institutions must empower our children with health, well-being, and successful decision-making prowess, not with a literary linguistics of emotionally driven behavior that demands cognitive control, but with cognitive-emotional symbiotic reprocessing of one's own mental activities using emotional awareness. Meditation and mindfulness have a necessary evolved emotional aspect that must be awakened. Sports psychology must also integrate our evolved symbiotic nature of mind, body, emotions, and awareness and empower athletes not with mental toughness, but with mental discipline to spring off disempowering, emotionally bad-feeling cognitions and onto empowering, emotionally good-feeling cognitions that correlate with a strong, powerful, and balanced physiology of success.