

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 is available from <https://symbioticpsychology.com/>).

All my work is dedicated to University of Wisconsin long distance
runner who committed suicide.

Sarah Shulze (2000-2022)

We taught her how to run, but not how to live.

Plato's Allegory of the Cave describes prisoners chained in a cave, seeing only shadows of objects projected on a wall, mistaking these illusions for reality. One prisoner escapes, experiences the true world (the intelligible realm of Forms) outside, and realizes the shadows were mere copies. Upon returning to share this truth, the enlightened prisoner is met with disbelief and hostility from the others, illustrating the struggle to attain true knowledge beyond sensory experience and the philosopher's duty to guide others, even against resistance.

Google AI Summary

“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 winnowing by which alone the truth can be found.”

Sifting and Winnowing Plaque on Bascom Hall, Madison, Wisconsin USA

(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). “*Iliad*” (A.S. Kline, Trans.), Benard Picart & Hendrick Goltzius

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 psychology of well-researched and evidenced based cognitive behavior modification therapies.

Neurogenesis and neuroplasticity is where the brain, with similar repetitive use, develops and reinforces the nerve pathways linking different areas of the brain into a common biological neural network (BNN). Because of these principles, as students' (and future academics) learn the emotional linguistics within language and literature, these reinforced neural networks become "hard-wired" as the brain becomes "neurolinguistically programmed". The question now arises, has a person's core beliefs of emotions and emotional behavior – which may have been neurolinguistically molded from childhood through family interactions and, in later years, through reading and comprehending such literary works as Dickens's "*Great Expectations*", Poe's "*The Raven*", Shelley's "*Frankenstein*", 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 these 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.

Taoist yin and yang comes from the harmonious movement of light (yang) and shadow (yin) 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 our academic arenas is a very sexist language of an inferior, dangerous, and aberrant “feminine” emotional body that must be controlled, regulated, and managed, by the superior and “masculine” cognitive mind.

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 cognitive-emotional behavior be neurolinguistically 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 strong, healthy, and balanced physiology of the brain and body conducive to health, well-being, and successful decision-making, or (2) an emotionally feeling-good correlation with a weak, unhealthy, and imbalanced physiology of the brain and body susceptible to illness, injury, and poor decision-making ability? Or within 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 behaviors (such as thoughts, memories, beliefs, imaginings, perceptions, and reasonings) must correlate 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 must 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 health and well-being, and mentally for successful decision-making prowess.

But 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. And every writer since Homer reflects this same emotional linguistic psychology developed in 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 literary and linguistic 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.)

Emotions have evolved, not to be controlled, but to guide cognitive behavior towards health, well-being, and success through cognitive reprocessing with emotional awareness. That is, emotions have evolved to guide cognitive behavior away from bad-feeling mental activities indicative of an imbalanced physiology of weakness, ill-health, and poor decision-making and towards good-feeling cognitions that precipitate a healthy physiology of health, well-being, and success. Physiologically speaking, emotionally good-feeling cognitive behaviors are good. And emotionally bad-feeling cognitive behaviors are bad... physiologically speaking.

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

Emotional awareness has evolutionary significance. Emotions are integral to our natural, operant conditioning mechanisms where pain discourages and pleasure entreats behavior. Emotional awareness has evolved to guide an individual off emotionally bad-feeling and physiologically imbalanced cognitive behavior susceptible to illness, accidents, and poor decision-making capacity and onto emotionally good-feeling and physiologically balanced cognitive behaviors conducive to health, well-being, and 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 emotionally bad-feeling cognitions.

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 student's mind, body, emotional awareness through a symbiotic psychology creates a stronger, healthier, and more empowered student that is mentally more fluid, agile, and has a greater capacity for successful decision-making.

(4) Educational Psychology and Literacy Education and the Science of Human Physiology

Has educational psychology and literacy education properly researched and understood the basic hypothesis and foundation of human behavior where "emotions drive behavior"? Well researched and evidenced based cognitive behavior therapies (CBT) use the interrelationships between mind, emotions, and behavior but focus on the mind-emotion-behavior directional relationship and mantra... "change your thoughts and change your emotions and your

emotionally driven behaviors". CBT psychology has proven the 3000-year-old literary 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 from nature videos found on YouTube how aggressive mother bears can be. I rationally believe myself to be in danger. Now... after all this cognitive activity of knowing, perceptual awareness, and reasoning... then the physiological changes and states within the brain and body are precipitated to activate my fearful fight, flight, or freeze behavior responses.

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 neural 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 legs run from the bear, are changes and states of neurology, biochemistry, and physiology orchestrated by a highly sophisticated and complex neurological brain.

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

Now, the key question, what precipitates these changes and states of physiological being that drives behavior? 3000 years of emotional linguistics says, "emotions drive behavior" and therefore emotions precipitate the changes and states of physiological being in the brain and

body (that drives behavior). This is “reaffirmed” within well proven and evidenced based cognitive behavior modification therapies which simply states, “change your thoughts and you change your emotions... and your emotionally driven behavior”.

What is missing from this mind, emotion, and behavior cognitive triangle is today’s research into changes and states of physiological being within the brain and body. That is, the changes and states of neurological, biochemical, and physiological being within the brain and body that drives human behavior. “Emotionally driven” behavior means that emotions must precipitate the changes in physiology that drives behavior. But as in the bear analogy demonstrates, these changes in physiology are also necessary before the perception of emotions are possible. How can emotions be both causal to changes in physiology that drives behavior and be the perceptual effect of these 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 changes and states of physiology and a perceived effect of these changes. But there is a simple and superior Occam's Razor to eliminate this cause-and-effect paradox.

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. Isn't that a goal of an author's cognitive literary dissertation... to emotionally move its audience?

Today's behavioral and pharmacological science has 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 and precipitate the changes and states of physiological being that drives behavior and are perceived as emotions, a logical process order is restored. 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. The linguistics of emotionally driven behavior as inscribed in Homer's "*Iliad*" is a flawed shortcut utilized by today's literary artisans that sabotages an evolved symbiotic

mind, body, and emotional awareness archetype necessary for the health, well-being, and success of the individual and of the culture and society in which they live.

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

Ever since Achilles' fatal rage brought countless sorrows upon the Greeks, humanity has been erroneously programed to believe that feminine aberrant and dangerous emotions drive destructive behavior and therefore the “inferior” feminine emotional body must be controlled, regulated, and managed 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 free an individual imprisoned within the a masculine cognitive language and emotional linguistics found within today’s universities, 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 “vice” classification. 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 the science of health, well-being, and successful decision-making prowess, not with a literary linguistics of emotionally driven behavior that demands cognitive control of emotional behavior. Our educational institutions must reestablish evolutionary, physiological, and philosophical order through cognitive-emotional symbiotic reprocessing of one's own disempowering, negative, and emotionally bad-feeling mental activities towards empowering, positive, and emotionally good-feeling cognitions that are conducive to health, well-being, and successful decision-making prowess.

Just as primary and secondary literacy and literary educators teach how an author's prose develops and establishes each character's cognitions, emotions, and behavior, these teachers can teach their students how their own internal cognitive prose (thoughts, memories, beliefs, imaginings, perceptions, and reasonings) establishes their own emotions, behavior, and world. And what's most important, just as an author moves their story and characters along a journey of discovery, each student can use their own guiding principles within a symbiotic psychology and

harmony of mind, body, and emotional awareness to develop and continually improve their own life-long journey towards health, well-being, and success.

Individual and societal survivability, growth, and future is now dependent more than ever on our academia.... “*should ever encourage that continual and fearless sifting and winnowing by which alone the truth can be found.*”

(7) Emotional Wisdom

A nation of peace, harmony, and justice cannot exist in a masculine psychology and literary linguistics of emotionally driven behavior and control, conflict, and suppression. Cognition, not emotion, precipitates the good and bad feeling neurological, biochemical, and physiological changes and states of being in the brain and body that drives behavior. Emotions are the perception of these changes and states of physiology. Our feminine emotional being has evolved not to be controlled, regulated, or managed by our masculine mind, but to empathetically guide cognitive behavior towards good feeling, healthy, and successful decision-making prowess and abilities.

Ancient Greek philosophers and today’s academic dissertations of emotional suffering, slavery, and vulnerability exist only when cognitively dwelling upon the lack or absence of that which is wanted, desired, or intended. When these emotionally negative cognitive activities are re-processed, re-structured, and re-developed into emotionally positive cognitions, a being of emotional suffering, slavery, and vulnerability is transformed, transmuted, and

renovated into a being of joy, freedom, and power with the imaginative, artistic, and creative mind necessary to fashion and manifest their wanted, desired, and intended world, reality, truth, and favored fortune.

Andrew O. Jackson
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“I like to say I have a PhD in Psychology from the School of Hard Knocks. The difference being that an accredited school requires classes, exams, and a successful defense of one’s own dissertation. I, on the other hand, either realize, develop, and self-prescribe a new psychology of cognitive-emotional behavior more in line with natural evolution and live, or fail and die.”

Andrew O. Jackson suffered from psychotic mania, suicidal depression, and schizophrenic tendencies. He was in and out of mental hospitals from 1979 to 1996. Once after another “blackout” period, he “awoke” in a mental ward and wondered how he got there this time. The nurse said he went up to a police car and told them that his friend needed help. His “friend” was a trash can. Another time he “awoke” with a rope in his hand ready to put an end to this torturous life when a voice asked him, “Can you go on?” “They” wanted him to continue this existence a while longer. He replied, “Yes” and got himself to a hospital.

Around 1993, in a moment of inspiration that has now led to his cognitive-emotional re-processing paper, he began a self-directed healing program using his good-feeling emotions, moods, attitudes, and feelings as indicators of, and a progression towards a healthy biochemical, neurological, and physiological state of being. After a couple more psychotic episodes (one that landed him in the El Paso County jail and led to a divorce from his first wife) and after seventeen years of therapists, psychologists, and psychiatrists, he no longer needed the benefits of their assistance. He has been medication-free and without disassociation, depression, or mania episodes since 1996.

Since 2005, he has been writing to academics around the world advancing a new emotional paradigm that defines cognition as causal to and emotions as an effect of biochemical, neurological, and physiological states of being. Emotions, instead of being regulated by cognitive behavior as current psychological academia prescribes, have evolved into a cognitive-emotional control mechanism to guide cognitive behavior towards the health, well-being, and prosperity of the individual.

He has an MS in Technology Education and an MS in Management Technology from the University of Wisconsin – Stout. He was a high school shop teacher, a college CAD (computer-aided design) instructor, a guest instructor in China teaching quality and inventory management, and a quality manager at an OEM (original equipment manufacturer). He is now happily married and retired from mechanical engineering, spending his summers sailboat racing and winters alpine skiing with his wife Barbie and their two cats.
