THE PSYCHOLOGICAL RECORD: REAFFIRMING THE PAST AND EMBRACING THE FUTURE

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With gratitude to Charles E. Rice and veneration for the prosperous, nearly 80-year history that the journal has enjoyed, I accept the position of Editor of The Psychological Record. The journal has played an important role in my own upbringing as a researcher and as a contributor to the peer-review process. In its provision of opportunities for newer researchers, the journal has invested wisely in sustaining our field. Under my editorship the journal will continue to support the efforts of newer scientists, much as it did under my predecessor.

Following its inception at Indiana University in 1932 (e.g., Bartlett, 1997; Mountjoy & Cone, 1997), the journal became prominent within the field of experimental psychology. In providing an outlet for manuscripts from all areas of scientific psychology, it was the founders’ intentions that authors would experience a more rapid turn-around from submission to publication than was the case with other general psychology journals at the time (Mountjoy & Cone, 1997). Despite difficulties created by World War II, The Psychological Record remained a vehicle for the talents of those, including B. F. Skinner and J. R. Kantor, who would directly impact the course of our discipline. After suspending operation for a period during and after World War II, the journal moved to the University of Wichita, under the editorship of Paul Swartz in the 1950s. This marked the onset of Phase 2 in the journal’s history (Wolf, 1976). A 17-year Phase 3 ensued under the editorship of Irvin S. Wolf at Denison University. 1976 saw it relocated to Kenyon College, and Phase 4 began the 30-year leadership of Charles E. Rice (Wolf, 1976).

During all of these periods the journal has been committed to publishing meritorious scientific work from all areas of psychology, with a special affinity for conceptual analyses and philosophic deliberations, consistent with the interests and backgrounds of its founders.

Rather than rearticulate the journal’s past, I wish to emphasize particular ambitions to which the journal has held fast. The field of psychology, behavioral psychology in particular, is at a pivotal point in its development. By reaffirming its goals, The Psychological Record could occupy a prominent role in the future of our discipline.

Upholding the Philosophic Core

As scientific pursuits have become less focused on accruing pure knowledge for knowledge’s sake and more focused on findings of social significance, the professionalization of psychology has burgeoned. Behavioral psychology in particular is currently proliferating as a technology as the recruitment of certified behavior analysts becomes more and more widespread.
(e.g., Shook, 1993). No doubt other areas of psychology are experiencing similar tensions between research and practice. With this concentration on application comes a fear that we will lose hold of the philosophical underpinnings that provide the foundation for our discipline. As the need for well-trained technicians continues, our grasp of the philosophical issues at the very heart of our field’s history may become further elusive yet. This bleak state of affairs was recognized decades ago by Hayes, Rincover, and Solnick (1980), who observed behavioral psychologists to be less engaged in the asking of conceptual questions and more engaged in technical efforts, and again articulated by Hayes (2006, p. 61), who likened current efforts in behavioral psychology to “tool polishing” endeavors.

Losing grasp of our philosophical core would only have devastating consequences for the evolution of scientific psychology as a whole, which, like other social sciences, has been declared to be in a pre-paradigmatic state for some time (Kuhn, 1970, p. 15). Some scholars might contend that psychology has not yet reached a level of development in which the leading thinkers of the field agree on its basic assumptions, methods, and units of analysis (Young, 1966). Kuhn described an immature science as one lacking in consensus, with competing schools of thought isolated in their unique procedures and theories such that the discipline’s collective progress is hindered (Kuhn, 1970, p. 11; Young, 1966). Others argue that psychology is in fact an advanced, multi-paradigmatic discipline (e.g., Hergenhan, 1997, p. 10), and still others contend that the history of the discipline is not reflective of a paradigmatic science (Warren, 1971). Kuhn acknowledged, however, that collective progress is not impossible (1970), but, I argue, will certainly be more arduous if the philosophical issues that engendered this field are not inherent components of research and practice as they were decades ago. The founders of The Psychological Record were active scholars in the fields of both philosophy and psychology and thus saw the journal as a means for widespread dissemination of powerful theoretical arguments and analyses. Such works often have the domino effect of stimulating further debate and scrutiny. It is from such collective analytic work that scientific progress can be made.

During Phase 5 The Psychological Record will hold fast to its historical roots in the solicitation and publication of manuscripts of a conceptual or philosophic nature. As proclaimed by Russell (1959, p. 230), philosophy and science can not be separate from one another and differ only in generality: “Philosophic knowledge is not fundamentally different from psychological knowledge, and the answers achieved by one of these disciplines are not dissimilar from the answers achieved by the other” (Russell, 1959, p. 239). Indeed, Kitchener (2004) calls for a recognition of the continuity between science and philosophy. Zimmerman (1996) contends that not only are science and philosophy interrelated, but feedback occurs in both directions (p. 432). In reaffirming psychology’s role as a natural science, we must continue to pay homage to its philosophic foundation.

In hopes of rearousing our philosophic core, I have launched a project of electronic archiving of many early, seminal works published in
Providing a Context for Communication and Cooperation between Schools

Upon its creation The Psychological Record was intended to service all of scientific psychology. Although the journal can credit much of its success to its wide dissemination among behavioral psychologists, Kantor felt strongly that the journal be committed to all of scientific psychology, not just one subset of the field as a whole (Mountjoy & Cone, 1997). This commitment is apparent in the diverse research interests held by the journal's founders, including animal learning, intelligence, child development, aesthetics, and public opinion polling, to name a few (Mountjoy & Cone, 1997). Indeed, Volume 1 contains studies on such wide ranging topics as motor disability (Gesell, 1937), treatments for schizophrenia (Hoagland, Cameron, & Rubin, 1937), mood questionnaires (Dysinger, 1937), word association (Skinner, 1937), and radio listening (Baker, 1937). The founders believed that representing multiple schools of thought within the discipline would stimulate discussion between researchers from different schools, as well as promote the borrowing of methodologies between schools. The objective sought increased tolerance for one another's differing philosophic assumptions.

The advantages of schools being insular and publishing in their own journals were articulated by Czubaroff (1993), who also pointed out the severe consequences of such isolation. A school which is isolated, Czubaroff (1993) contended, is likely to adopt a competitive, hostile stance towards the other schools, thus leading to further secularity and prohibiting the scholarly exchange of ideas between schools. In short, the mutual influence between schools may be minimal (Czubaroff, 1993, p. 2). This may not be the most desirable position for a discipline that has struggled to assert its status as a natural science. While different schools of thought may not share the same ontological assumptions, they may, nonetheless, benefit from the sharing of research findings, procedures, analytical tools, and experimental preparations. Moreover, the consideration of other theoretical points of view is often a healthy intellectual exercise, challenging the thinker to view the world from a different vantage point and possibly in the end, to redefine one's own assumptions. As stated by Czubaroff (1993), in such a context of communication and cooperation, "truth, in its many-faceted character, is in a far better position to emerge" (p. 3).

Let The Psychological Record provide such a context, and continue to serve all of psychology as a natural science as its founders intended. Articles that bridge subdisciplines will be particularly welcome. The journal will be a forum for debate, discussion, and continued development of our still young field.

Future Directions

By reaffirming key aspects of the journal's past, the stage is set for
a similarly bright future. In recent years *The Psychological Record* has become an important outlet for basic human operant research, in effect, offering a niche provided by few other journals. This practice is expected to continue in Phase 5, particularly the solicitation of studies investigating uniquely human behaviors, including language, cognition, and social behavior. The journal has also had a lengthy history of investing in manuscripts of the animal learning tradition, a practice which can also be expected to continue. However, the journal will continue to service the entire field of scientific psychology. Two new submission categories have been created with the goals of upholding our philosophic core and providing a context for communication between schools in mind:

1) Manuscripts that are “in response” to previously published manuscripts: By encouraging such ongoing dialogue, any number of issues can be debated and discussed. Responding to previously published conceptual analyses with an intersubdisciplinary flavor may be particularly appealing to the journal's broad readership.

2) Research Innovations: The purpose of this category is to provide an outlet for descriptions of new and creative uses of technology, pioneering apparati, or unusual experimental procedures, such that researchers from other laboratories can become similarly engaged in new experimental techniques. Although the manuscripts will be short (no more than 150 lines will be advised), this category is not intended for studies that do not merit publication as full-length articles. Rather, the purpose is to showcase the risky, creative efforts of researchers that may stimulate others from a variety of research traditions.

Other future endeavors include, as mentioned, the electronic archiving of early articles that were seminal in the journal's history. The collection will likely include the majority of J. R. Kantor’s works that were published in the journal as a service to the small but lively interbehavioral community. In addition, the journal could enjoy considerable success if it were more widely disseminated in a variety of international communities. With 16% of current individual and institutional subscriptions being outside of the United States, the journal does seem to be reaching a number of regions. This number can be increased substantially, however, particularly upon the solicitation of international laboratories. Finally, to stimulate the next generation of *The Psychological Record*’s community of readers, reviewers, and researchers, more student subscriptions are imperative. That effort is currently under way.

One way to conceptualize the history of psychology is to emphasize the greater context in which scientific ideas emerge, defined by scholars as a Zeitgeist, or a spirit of the times (Hergenhahn, 1997). As we embark upon the next phase in the journal’s progression, my hope is that *The Psychological Record* can be a vital participant in the spirit of our times, in effect stimulating creative work by both newer and more seasoned researchers from a variety of subdisciplines and from many corners of the globe. In so doing, the journal can well play a role in shaping the future of our discipline.
References


