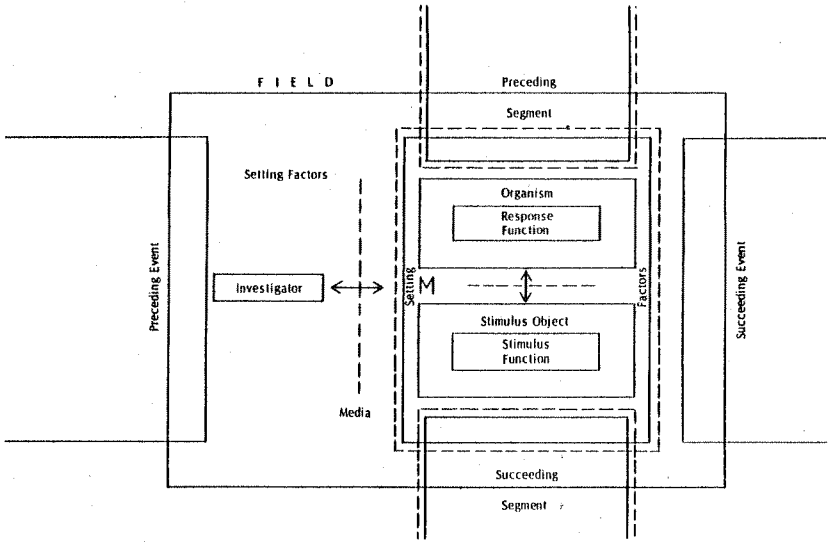
THE Interbehaviorist



A QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER OF INTERBEHAVIORAL PSYCHOLOGY

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The behavior of the individual in the environment in which he lives is not going to be analyzed by instruments that get inside that organism. It's on the outside that the behavior takes place. Changes occur inside, and the omniscient physiologist may eventually tell us what they are. At the moment he can't tell us very much. I said in 1938 that I knew of no physiological fact that threw any light on behavior, and I still don't.

B. F. Skinner, 1977. Excerpt from interview with David Cohen, Psychologists on Psychology, Taplinger Publishing Company.

THE INTERBEHAVIORIST

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The Agora

Before his untimely death in July 1977, Klaus Riegel was one of the most strikingly original developmental psychologists, historians of psychology, and commentators on the discipline. In his last book, Psychology, Mon Amour: A Countertext (published posthumously by Houghton-Mifflin, 1978), he paid a brief tribute to a kindred revolutionary, J. R. Kantor:

> Our experts believe that the minds of geneticists work like a snapshot camera: Zap - and there you have the display of the 48 chromosomes of the fruit fly, thinly sliced for the microscope and nicely ordered, as they ought to be according to the textbooks. Fortunately, the minds of geneticists are in as much a state of flux or transformation as they believe the genetic organization to be. The snapshot is but an artificial fixation that crudely represents a momentary state of the genetic structures (in vitro) within the changing organism (in vivo).
>
> Present-day psychologists, however, have closed their minds to the problem of inner changes. As Descartes fell on God, they fall on the genetic structure as if it were a rest room - clean, restricted, unchanging, and thus safe. But such places do not exist in the sciences; they are bound to become dirty. They are already dirty. A few far-sighted psychologists, for example Jacob Kantor, have for many decades recognized the problem of interactive changes, but their voices have been drowned by the loudspeakers (and not the radicals) of modern psychology.

In Kantor's most recent published work (Observer, Comments and queries: What future for psychology?, Psychological Record, Spring 1979) there is a brief mention of the potential pitfalls in describing the role of genetic factors in psychological events. A more substantial discussion of genes and the interbehavioral field may be found in Kantor's Interbehavioral Psychology (Principia Press, 1959).

* * *

At the June 1979 convention of the Association for Behavior Analysis, Paul Mountjoy and Linda Parrot co-chaired an Interbehavioral Interest Group meeting. Those present agreed that inclusion of symposia devoted to Interbehavioral approaches to psychology on the 1980 program was feasible. Topics suggested included: causality, specific issues in the history of psychology, the Interbehavioral description of "covert" events, ways in which an Interbehavioral orientation could contribute to and strengthen the applied behavior analysis movement, methods of teaching Interbehaviorism to students, and contributions of the Interbehavioral orientation to the conduct of research.

Interested individuals are requested to communicate their willingness to participate and the topic which they would be willing to present to either Paul or Linda at the Department of Psychology, Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo, MI 49008. It is urged that responses be mailed as soon as possible because of the expected deadline of November, 1979 for finalization of the program.

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The editor, Ronald Heyduk, wishes to announce his interest in finding a new position for the academic year 1980-81 (or possibly sooner). I have a strong background (Ph.D., University of Michigan) and strong teaching credentials in general experimental psychology (especially research methods, human motivation, and visual perception), with publications and papers in the areas of preference for complexity and visual illusions of size. In addition, I have great interest and developing expertise in the history, systems, and philosophical issues of psychology. I would like to find a teaching position (Associate or advanced Assistant Professorship) or a combined administrative-teaching position at a school placing its highest value upon quality teaching. However, I might also be interested in and qualified for a research or administrative position outside of an academic environment. Please write or call me at 614-427-2244, Extension 2374.

* * *

Two contributions are included in this issue. The first is a report of an interview of J. R. Kantor by Cedric Larson, currently writing a biography of John B. Watson. The interview is revealing of the styles and psychologies of both Watson and Kantor. The second contribution is introduced following the Larson article.

* * *

AN INTERVIEW WITH J.R. KANTOR ABOUT JOHN B. WATSON

Cedric A. Larson

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Division (Retired)

A number of years ago, when I started out collecting data and information on the life of John B. Watson for a biography, many colleagues suggested that I should try to interview as many psychologists as possible who might have known Watson in his active years. Several people suggested the name of Dr. J. R. Kantor, the founder of Interbehaviorism, and an early worker in the broad field of Behaviorism. The first step was a letter addressed to him at Indiana University in Bloomington on August 13, 1963. This letter was forwarded to his home in Chicago and he responded on August 18th. In this letter he said: "It is a coincidence that your letter came while I was preparing a short article on Behaviorism which I hope to have appear in October."[1]

His letter went on to say: "Yes, I knew Dr. Watson quite well. Naturally, he should have a large place in any book on the Behavioristic movement. In the brief paper I am preparing I indicate the important influence that Loeb exercised on the development of Behaviorism . . . I am to be visiting Professor at the University of Maryland this coming year. I shall be glad to discuss with you the topic of your book if we can arrange a time and place mutually convenient to us both."

The winter of 1963-64 was quite a severe one, but after exchanging further letters and telephone calls, a date for an interview was set up for February 29, 1964, at the Psychology Department of the University of Maryland, College Park, Maryland. As I recall it, this was on Saturday, and a bright, clear, late winter day with mild temperatures.

At the time, Dr. Kantor was 76 years old. He was a short, rather thin individual, with a warm, pleasant manner. He impressed me as a man of considerable energy, and he spoke clearly and concisely, never having the least difficulty in putting his ideas across. The interview took place in a classroom: he sat at his desk, and I sat in a chair taking notes. He frequently got up from his chair to draw diagrams on the board to help explain an idea.

It might be noted here that John B. Watson formulated his ideas on Behaviorism while at the University of Chicago (graduate student, 1900-1903; instructor and assistant professor, 1904-1908). Dr. Kantor received his baccalaureate degree from the University of Chicago in 1914, and his Ph.D. in 1917, so he must have learned much about Watson from psychologists who remained at Chicago after Watson had left in 1908.

The following are some of the highlights of the interview, taken down in shorthand at the time, and transcribed upon returning to my home. He recalled Watson as follows:

> "I was in a class of Dr. Watson's one summer at the University of Chicago. It must have been in the summer of 1914 or 1915. This

[1]This article was: J. R. Kantor, "Behaviorism: Whose Image?" The Psychological Record, Vol. 13, No. 4 (October, 1963), 499-512.

> was a return visit, and of course I was then only a student, so I did not have a lot of personal contacts with him. I only knew him as a professor.
>
> "Watson was a brilliant man in every way. His lectures were brilliant ones. He always went to the Faculty Exchange before class, picked up his mail, and then came to class. Before lecturing he took off his gloves, and glanced over his letters before he began his class. He was a very sportily dressed man. He had spats and a cane and gloves all the time."

Kantor's next remark on Watson's needs a bit of preliminary explanation. After Watson resigned from Johns Hopkins, and started working for the J. Walter Thompson Company in New York City in 1920, he taught nights at the New School for Social Research, the Cooper Union, and conducted some seminar-type classes at Columbia. Watson's name first appeared in the New School catalog for 1922-23. He taught there also in 1923-24, and in summer terms. His final year at the New School appears to have been 1925-26. (This teaching was of course all at night).

Watson had a habit of inviting guest lecturers to talk to his crowded classes at the New School. Most of them were eminent psychologists of their day. One of these was William McDougall, who lectured some time in the school year 1922-23. He was then at Harvard University and at the height of his career. McDougall published his lecture to Watson's class in The Psychological Review for July 1923.

In the spring of 1926 Watson had a number of prominent psychologists talk to his classes at the New School. Among them were Robert M. Yerkes, Edwin G. Boring, Raymond Dodge (of Yale), and George A. Dorsey, the Columbia University anthropologist.[2]

The foregoing explanation about Watson's night school courses at the New School in the 1920s was to give a brief background to Kantor's next remarks about Watson: "I met him also in New York later, I cannot tell you just when. I lectured for him in the New School. After I made my presentation, Watson said to his students that he thought I was more mechanical than he was." As a point of information, the stipend or honorarium for these visiting psychologists was $50 plus travel expenses for the lecture. That was in the 1920s, a sum that would be equivalent today to four or five times as much. Tuition at the New School in those days was about $20 per course, and Watson's classes were crowded.

The interview now turned to the more theoretical side, with some words of "good fatherly advice" -- as he put it. Kantor said: "Don't be too facile in saying one person was influenced by another. You have to be very careful about influences. It is true no doubt that Watson was influenced somewhat by Jennings and Loeb, but Jennings and Loeb were at sword points." Kantor suggested that a biography of Watson and the origin of behaviorism might be patterned after Mossner's The Life of David Hume (University of Texas Press, 1954).

[2]Cedric A. Larson, "John B. Watson and the New School for Social Research," paper presented at the 42nd annual convention of The New York State Psychological Association, Saratoga Springs, N.Y., May 12, 1979. 18 pages. (Unpublished manuscript).

He went on: Originally I thought that I would call my point of view organismic psychology. But there was a man by the name of Wheeler (Raymond H. Wheeler, 1892-1961) who used the name organismic (although in a different sense) so I dropped it.

"In a general way, a synonym for Behaviorism is anti-mentalism. Even in their essay on "The Rise and Fall of Behaviorism," Harrell and Harrison[3] have to say it had a great influence. Even Boring likes to say that consciousness is something neural. Watson wanted to get away from structuralism and functionalism, the two big viewpoints in this country in the early part of the century. Watson first discussed reactions in terms of efferent conduction to the muscles and glands. That is why Watsonian psychology was sometimes referred to as 'muscle twitch.' Since the description of a psychological event is in terms of muscles, glands and nerves, afferent and efferent conduction, one place to another, you call this molecular behaviorism. This is what Watson was.

"But he was also a molar behaviorist in part. Watson said we should not overemphasize the nervous system or muscles or glands. Man also had ideas. Things are complicated and if man has molecular behavior, he also has molar behavior. An example of a molar behaviorist is Tolman. Every purposive behaviorist would be a molar behaviorist, but not every molar behaviorist would be a purposive behaviorist.

"In the molecular and molar point of view in talking about the mind, they have to make all kinds of peculiar statements. That is, they have to do what Lashley criticized in Watson. He said, Watson is a methodological behaviorist. He adopts the method of not dealing with consciousness, but he does not settle the question of consciousness. Lashley's way of settling this was to throw it out and say: 'There is no such thing.' My point is that none of that really settles the problem for psychology. You do not have an anti-mentalism -- you do not have a description of behavior of any organism which is clear-cut and objective and completely without 'spooks.' This prepares the way for interbehaviorism.

"Interbehavioral psychology starts all over again. We are not anti-mentalistic but non-mentalistic. Interbehavioral psychology has the idea that we should do what the Greeks did. Aristotle wrote the first treatise we we have in psychology. He said that what we call psychology is part of biology. You study organisms and their actions. Biology is a part of physics. What you do is to observe an organism performing actions. We call our starting point the basic datum - a field.

"So we begin with pristine events. This puts psychology on the same level with biology and physics. You study the earth worm and see what it does under certain conditions and get some kind of law. We don't say S arouses R, but are factors of two actions in the field. Media of contact must be taken into account. What mentalists and behaviorists call stimuli (light rays, etc.) are only media of contact (other examples, auditory waves, electromagnetic waves). So interbehavioristic psychology starts off with

[3] Willard Harrell and Ross Harrison, "The Rise and Fall of Behaviorism," in The Journal of General Psychology, Vol. 18 (1938) 367-421. This notable article has 426 references at the end. Seven of these are to articles and books by Kantor (Nos. 169-175). History has shown that this article predicting the demise of behaviorism was wide of the mark. Behaviorism, today, is alive and well.

a field, builds up constructs (descriptions, hypotheses, laws, etc.) Those are all built up observations of the field ("field" here has nothing to do with Kurt Lewin's formulation).

"Interbehavioral psychology has two important principles. First, you build your propositions on the basis of observations. Second, imposing constructions -- descriptions and hypotheses and laws not derived from events or from the investigation of events -- are to be avoided."

The foregoing paragraphs contain the highlights of the interview which lasted a two good hours. I was especially impressed with the clarity of thought and speech. He later sent me a copy of his article: "Behaviorism: Whose Image?" His opening remarks in this essay (see footnote 1) are worth repeating: "The twentieth century development of psychological Behaviorism is without doubt one of the most significant events in the whole of modern science. Certainly no other event in the History of Psychology appears so stirring and revolutionary . . . . Behaviorism has been declared to be a type of interpretation or theory, while it has also been elevated to the dignity of a philosophy, a philosophy of science venturing far beyond the boundaries of the particular discipline, which is psychology."

It is the thesis of this truly fascinating article that "Behaviorism is the core of science, the enterprise of investigating the behavior of things and events under specific controlled conditions. It is further proposed that interbehavioral psychology as the study of total behavioral fields, of which organismic actions constitute one component, best fulfills the requirements of the behavioristic enterprise in this specialized area."

As a postscript to the foregoing, I last met Dr. Kantor personally at the 85th annual convention of the A.P.A. in San Francisco in 1977. I recognized him in the lobby of a hotel one afternoon and went over and spoke with him. I found him still alert and friendly. He promised to send me some further reprints of later articles which he had written. I received them later in the fall, including two published in 1973 and 1975, and also one in the Mexican Journal of Behavior Analysis in 1976, which also contained Noel W. Smith's fascinating article: "The Works of J. R. Kantor: Pioneer in Scientific Psychology."

One paragraph of Kantor's 1976 article caught myyeye especially: "By a curious coincidence, I, like J. B. Watson at an earlier date, entered the University of Chicago with Philosophic interests, though of a very different type. Watson proposed to study conventional philosophy with John Dewey, whereas I wished to further my knowledge and understanding of the nature of things and events including human beings, with which we are inevitably surrounded. I early became highly sensitive to the differences between pristine events and the constructions built for their description."[4]

One can only agree with Noel W. Smith, who mentions the "prodigious scholarship" encompassed by the works of Kantor, in 102 articles and books, and a long list of book reviews, and articles published in six languages besides English: here indeed is a scientific psychologist whose work needs to be better known and appreciated. Kantor was 91 years old Aug. 8 1979, but his life shows age need be no limitation to productivity.

[4] J. R. Kantor, "The Origin and Evolution of Interbehavioral Psychology," Mexican Journal of Behavior Analysis, Vol. 2, No. 2 (July 1976), 120-136. (Quote from p. 121)

* * *

One of the most attractive aspects of interbehaviorism is that it provides a refreshing perspective upon (and perhaps even a resolution for) some of the most persistent and troublesome underlying issues in psychology, such as freedom versus determinism, the mind-body problem, and the active versus passive organism. In the following short essay by David Cohen, an undergraduate senior at Kenyon College, another enduring issue in psychology is discussed, and once again the perspective offered by interbehaviorism emerges as a valuable one.

* * *

ANALYSIS VERSUS WHOLISM REVISITED

David Cohen[1]
Kenyon College

The fundamental issues of psychology are not so easily separable as a brief synopsis of them makes it appear. A certain perspective on the mind-body problem, for example, may imply a corresponding position regarding free will versus determinism. The specific issue that this essay will address is whether consciousness and behavior are more fruitfully viewed analytically or wholistically. This question is related to the conflict between reductionists and non-reductionists, and also to the issue of whether psychological processes can best be understood as simple or complex phenomena.

The essence of the conflict between analytic and wholistic approaches can be seen in the first paragraph. In questioning the value and practicality of viewing the fundamental issues of psychology as a set of clearly distinguishable questions, I am arguing in favor of wholism and against analysis: it is only by considering the issues in relation to each other that we can get a true picture of them.

In the pre-scientific years of psychology, philosophers of mind engaged each other in a healthy dialectic regarding the question of analysis vs. wholism. We can find a clear instance of this conflict in one famous family. James Mill, in the mainstream of British associationism, believed that any idea is only the sum of other simpler ideas. In contrast, his son John Stuart Mill held that complex concepts were more than the sum of component ideas.

With the advent of the experimental psychology of consciousness in 19th century Germany, analysis gained a clear (though temporary) advantage, probably because little fresh objective understanding of consciousness could be gained without analysis. However, the analytic-wholistic conflict was revived with William James' criticism of the methods of Wilhelm Wundt in the 1890's. Wundt believed that by using trained introspection, one could arrive at the elemental structure of consciousness. Consciousness is made up of particular mental experiences which are in turn made up of ideas and feelings. Ideas are composed of sensations which have both

[1]This essay is a revision of an answer submitted by the author to a question on a take-home examination in the History and Systems of Psychology at Kenyon College. I wish to acknowledge the help of the course instructor and editor of The Interbehaviorist, Ronald G. Heyduk, in the re-writing of the essay.

intensity and quality, etc.[2] James had a number of objections to this method of describing mental processes. One argument was that Wundt was not being analytic -- he was postulating the existence of the elements and then showing how they could be synthesized into the whole. More pertinent to this discussion is James' assertion that certain phenomenon cannot be analyzed. The stream of consciousness is transitory and cannot be stopped for analysis; the introspection itself may destroy the state. Furthermore, those elements that can be isolated may not exist in normal consciousness (the "psychologists fallacy").

More recent times have seen a continuation of the debate between those favoring analytic and wholistic approaches. The conflict between behaviorism (especially Watsonian behaviorism) and Gestalt psychology is an important 20th century example. Watson was extremely analytic, viewing complex behaviors as concatenations of "stimulus" and "response" units. In contrast, the Gestalt psychology of Wertheimer, Köhler, and Koffka was the ultimate in wholism, arguing that an elementizing of psychological phenomena overlooks the importance of the relationships between elements, whether the subject of analysis is consciousness or behavior.

An intriguing synthesis of analysis and wholism is achieved by J. R. Kantor's interbehaviorism, which has something in common with both Gestalt psychology and Watsonian behaviorism. While adopting many of the terms and anti-mentalistic bias of analytic behaviorism, interbehaviorism holds that an organism's actions cannot be described in terms of simple stimulus-response, cause-effect sequences. Stimuli and responses cannot be separated, nor is a linear, "billiard-ball" view of causality appropriate. Every psychological event must be considered within the context of the multidimensional field in which it occurs, encompassing preceding, succeeding, and surrounding events.

From a historical perspective it seems that a combination of analytic and wholistic approaches is optimal for psychology's development. The analytic approach of the associationists enriched and advanced our conception of consciousness; but the criticisms of Reid's wholistic Scottish school provided a valuable tempering influence. Similarly, the debate between 20th century analysts and wholists is crucial to the character of modern psychology. The case is convincing that we can never gain a full understanding of phenomena from analysis alone -- the whole is equal to more than the sum of its parts. Yet analysis has proven to be a practical and productive way to advance our knowledge of complex psychological events.

[2]Recently there has been some doubt cast on the accuracy of traditional views that Wundt's psychology was elementaristic. For example, see: Blumenthal, A. L. The founding father we never knew. Contemporary Psychology, 1979, 24, 7, 547-550.

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