

# Integrating psychology research and behavioral management

Igor Elman

Department of Psychiatry, McLean Hospital, Harvard Medical School, Belmont, MA, USA

I am grateful that about two years ago Dove Medical Press offered me the opportunity to edit the *Journal of Psychology Research and Behavior Management*. I find my work on the *Journal* to be a very gratifying experience and I particularly enjoy its eclectic multidisciplinary qualities that, by attracting contributions from a variety of perspectives and geographic locations, help to ease the artificial boundaries separating our field from other critical areas relevant to mental health, psychology, psychiatry, and to a genuinely broad understanding of human nature and behavior.

Furthermore, integration of psychology and behavior is a huge and fascinatingly complex endeavor that has filled and will certainly continue to fill countless volumes of scientific and philosophical literature. Indeed, in the form of the body–mind conundrum, psychology and behavior has permeated human cognition for over 3000 years! While people attributed their behaviors and motivations to the will of Gods in Homer's era, the term “psyche” only appeared about a millennium after the events described in *The Iliad*. Plato coined this term and, as did Freud, viewed behavior as a derivative of the conflict among the rational, instinctual, and emotional forces comprising the psyche. Aristotle, Plato's student, further developed his teacher's ideas by postulating the holistic and indivisible nature of the body–mind amalgamation. Such Aristotelian concepts survived mostly unchallenged until the 17th century when Descartes upheld the body–mind dualism, but denied the mind's physical qualities and thus ascribed it to the entirely spiritual domain. Behaviorism is in contrast a purely materialistic school of thought that emerged two centuries thereafter and it rather successfully endeavors to explain all psychic and behavioral phenomena solely on the basis of biochemical and/or physical processes.

The origins of human behavior and its management remains a subject of an intense and ongoing debate nowadays. The unprecedented progress in brain imaging technologies has undoubtedly helped to identify neural correlates of numerous cognitions, emotions, and behaviors. The obtained data are not entirely conclusive as we have not yet figured out the true meaning of the brain activity elicited with an astounding variety of stimuli employed on various neuroimaging projects. Following are a few instances of unanswered questions and challenges. Are activations of what is commonly referred as reward circuitry (eg, ventral striatum) equivalent to the perception of happiness? Does amygdala engagement by a stressful stimulus truly spell out negative emotions and fear? According to the same logic, blushing does not necessarily mean embarrassment whereas increased heart rate is not always the same as sexual arousal. These and

---

Correspondence: Igor Elman  
Department of Psychiatry, McLean Hospital, Harvard Medical School,  
15 Mill Street, Belmont, MA 02478, USA  
Email [ielman@partners.org](mailto:ielman@partners.org)

multiple other physiological correlates of psychic output may well turn out to be an addition (albeit a more sophisticated and an improved one) to the four bodily humors (yellow and black bile, phlegm, and blood) so eloquently described by Plato's contemporary, Hippocrates.

Publication outlets like ours that strive to define behavioral and clinical meaning to psychological phenomena are becoming increasingly important. Rather than strictly adhering to a certain theoretical framework, we encourage a heuristic approach that seeks to apply recent advances from all relevant disciplines to improve outcomes in clinical, educational, sports, and business settings. Notwithstanding the Talmudic wisdom that prophecy is given to fools, I predict much success to this type of journal.

In conclusion, I would like to convey my gratitude to our authors, reviewers, and readership along with the Dove

Medical Press editorial staff for their support and nurture of the *Journal of Psychology Research and Behavior Management*. I hope that the upcoming 2011 will be a very happy and healthy year and wish you all to find joy, harmony, and elegance in your scientific discoveries and in personal life.

## Disclosure

The author reports no conflicts of interest in this work.

## References

1. Amoroso RL. *Complementarity of Mind and Body: Realizing the Dream of Descartes, Einstein, and Eccles*. New York, NY: Nova Science Publishers; 2010.
2. LeDoux J. *The Synaptic Self*. New York, NY: Viking Penguin; 2002.
3. Leahey TH. *History of Modern Psychology*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall; 2009.
4. Smart JJC. Materialism. *Journal of Philosophy*. 1963;60:651–662.
5. Snell B. *The Discovery of the Mind*. New York, NY: Dover; 1982.

### Psychology Research and Behavior Management

#### Publish your work in this journal

Psychology Research and Behavior Management is an international, peer-reviewed, open access journal focusing on the science of psychology and its application in behavior management to develop improved outcomes in the clinical, educational, sports and business arenas. Specific topics covered include: Neuroscience, memory & decision making; Behavior

Submit your manuscript here: <http://www.dovepress.com/psychology-research-and-behavior-management-journal>

modification & management; Clinical applications; Business & sports performance management; Social and developmental studies; Animal studies. The manuscript management system is completely online and includes a quick and fair peer-review system. Visit <http://www.dovepress.com/testimonials.php> to read real quotes from published authors.

Dovepress