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# Editorial

## Reinforce or Challenge?

An academic journal is not always a comfortable read. We cannot read it with the expectation that it will reflect the same level of knowledge as ourselves. Most of us will find that some papers miss our level of knowledge with regard to concepts, theory, processes, methodologies or statistics. Unlike popular texts, there is not the expectation that the materials should be reduced in complexity to meet the average reader, though there is an expectation by the editors that the writing should be comprehensible, whatever the level of the ideas. There is no 'average reader'! An academic journal such as PCEP has many different readerships. It is also not designed to reinforce its readers' present level of comprehension, but rather to challenge them to expand the edges of their current knowledge and expertise.

Equally, an academic journal is not designed to be a comfortable read in terms of providing readers with confirmation of their ideas, values and practices. Instead, it seeks to maintain a fairly broad perspective in terms of ideas and practices and even to some extent values, and thereby to offer challenge more than reinforcement to the reader. If a journal narrows its focus or lowers its level in an effort to offer more comfort to its readers, it loses its function as a source of stimulation and challenge, and soon becomes more of a guild magazine than a real academic journal. We should expect to be provoked by our journal. Indeed, a good issue should expect a significant proportion of its readership to be annoyed or perhaps even outraged on a regular basis: 'How can this author defend such a practice?'; 'This writer is going against everything I value!'; 'These writers should be expelled from the approach!' To the extent that PCEP moves its readers to passionate response, either pro or con, it will have succeeded in providing stimulation and challenge.

A journal needs to be broad enough to include a challenging diversity. That diversity introduces the reader to new ideas, but, paradoxically, it also helps them to sharpen their case for what they already believe. If they now have to articulate carefully and justify their ideas, values and practices to others who have differences but are willing to listen, that is of crucial importance to their becoming effective 'agents' in the politics of present-day therapeutics. Within the PCE field there are many good clinicians, but rather fewer effective politicians. Asked by commissioners of services to justify, evidence, and even to articulate what we have to offer, many of us can be found lacking. This is where PCEP can be a key platform for

furthering the approach, but we hope that it will not usually be a comfortable, supportive experience — it will be challenging.

There are ways in which this journal, in association with the World Association and other subscriber associations, can begin to further this evocative function in the future. The Journal already challenges writers and readers to become aware of work from other cultures and in other languages — that will make a huge difference to the breadth of our scientific base and to our consultative network. Also, we can develop the dialogues stimulated by PCEP and by our academic conferences. We encourage our readers to write responses to published papers. As with all submissions to PCEP, these can be sent electronically, either for regular publication, or for posting on the PCEP website (<http://pce-world.org/journal.htm> or [pce-world./pcep.htm](http://pce-world./pcep.htm)). (Another possibility is the World Association Newsletter.) Indeed, the publication cycle of PCEP is sufficiently fast to include short ‘response’ pieces to earlier articles. These pieces would be independently reviewed as with all journal submissions, but the relative shortness and focus could represent a good possibility for readers becoming writers, and finding their own voice as challengers.

The next issue of PCEP will be a special one because we are going to use it substantially to print a comprehensive English and German language bibliography of the works of Carl Rogers. This has been under preparation for some years and is now complete and ready to be offered to readers.

The present issue contains a varied mix of material, including three regular articles, a review essay, an obituary, three bibliographies cataloguing the scholarly work of recently deceased colleagues, and two regular reviews. All of the articles and the review essay were contributed by Europeans, three from Dutch speakers. We open with Takens’ micro-analytic sequential analysis of Rogers’ therapy. Coffeng continues our coverage of trauma work with another innovative paper, while Stumm adds to our growing list of articles on the existential part of our tradition. The reviews are a varied lot also, covering books of multicultural issues, Person-Centered Therapy, and Process-Experiential Therapy. On a less happy note, we include an obituary for Laura Rice, who died July 18 2004. Now we mourn her visionary spirit, along with those of Tony Merry and John Wood, and we honor all three with a set of chronological bibliographies of their scholarly work, compiled by Peter F. Schmid. This is a new feature, introduced in this issue for the first time, but it seems to us to be a fitting way to remember these three individuals, and one which we hope they would appreciate. Take some time to follow the lines of their careers and consider revisiting their work and its implications for us even today!

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