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# Editorial commentaries

It has so far been an implicit *BBS* editorial policy that in the interest of preserving parity among commentaries the editor does not contribute to open peer commentary. For, unlike all other commentators, the editor chooses the referees and commentators, selects (with the help of the referees) and edits the target article and commentaries, has access to what the other commentators have written, and even exerts some influence over the author's response. It is accordingly evident that no commentary by the editor could be on the same footing as the other commentaries. The question remains, however, whether their necessarily privileged status entails that there is no equitable way editorial comments can be openly expressed in a journal of open peer commentary.

Special exceptions have in fact been made in three prior cases: In *BBS* 1(3) 1978 (Puccetti & Dykes: "Sensory Cortex and the Mind/Brain Problem"), I organized and classified recurrent themes among the commentaries and annotated the commentaries and response accordingly. In *BBS* 5(2) 1982, which was on the subject of peer review, I added extensive editorial annotations and an introductory overview. In *BBS* 7(4) 1984, which was devoted to the work of B. F. Skinner, both my co-editor for that special issue (A. C. Catania) and I summarized a series of issues that we felt had not been resolved by the commentaries and responses. The author responded to these editorial comments separately in the same issue. In all three cases, it was the special perspective available to the editor(s) that had motivated appending the editorial contribution.

Across the years it has also become evident that in many cases readers of the varied contributions to each *BBS* Treatment might benefit from an overview to orient them among the issues raised. With this in mind, I have been informally encouraging the writing of independent reviews and overviews of *BBS* Treatments in *BBS*'s Continuing Commentary section as well as in other

journals. I have also occasionally co-circulated certain target articles with a "precommentary" by a representative of either a unifying or an opposing point of view. Commentators comment on both, and both the author and the "precommentator" get to reply to the commentaries (although only the author replies to the "pre-" and "postcommentary"). The growing use of *BBS* reprints for educational purposes has also given rise to a projected offprint series by Cambridge University Press, which will be accompanied by editorial overviews.

No one can be expected to have an altogether objective view of the diversity of contributions to a *BBS* Treatment—not the author, the commentator, the reader, the referee, or the editor. At best, one can aspire to a coherent and informed view. I accordingly propose, on an experimental and occasional basis (because no one can claim sufficient expertise to attempt this in all of the areas covered by *BBS*), to establish and to contribute to a special category of commentary, namely, editorial commentary. This would consist of views and overviews presented explicitly from the vantage point of *BBS*'s editor. This policy is based on the assumption that it would be more in the spirit of open peer commentary to have as much as possible of the editor's unavoidably privileged perspective expressed openly rather than only covertly. It seems inescapable that an editor should have a point of view: this way the readership can have a better idea of what it might be and what influence it may or may not be exerting on other manifestations of editorial policy.

The distinct status of editorial commentaries will be reflected in their appearing separately at the end of the commentary section in the form of an editorial note, to which the author can reply in his response. I strongly encourage the *BBS* associateship, authorship, and readership to let me know their reactions to this provisional policy.