

Comments on Notes from K. Koffka Problems in the Psychology of Art

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1. Psychologists not only have the envisage behaviour as action in an experienced seen, heard, felt environment, but have to concern themselves with the structure and properties of this environment (p.182).
2. Psych. is concerned with truth in logic and beauty in art, if only because both characterize a stability and permanence in human thought that is not found with the false and ugly.
3. A basic problem of subjectivity is the lack of identity of two common definitions of objectivity:

<i>First Definition (phenomenological)</i>		<i>Second Definition (functionality)</i>	
belonging or not to self		dependent or not on organism	
Subjective	Objective	Subjective	Objective
Pain	Colour	Pain	
	Table	Colour	
		Table	
			Table Light waves

Note that:

- (a) anything that has phenomenological existence is partly dependent upon the subject,
- (b) that which is functionally subjective may be phenomenologically objective (like a table or work of art)
- (c) that which has an entry in both functionally subjective and objective must refer to two different aspect (e.g. table or art).

Psychology is concerned with that which is functionally dependent.

4. The phenomenal object depends upon a physical object, and upon the conditions of the organism and consequently may be changes in either or both. Thus, relatively of beauty is not proven by evidence that the same art object is differently valued – it would also be necessary to prove that the viewers saw the same object (i.e. judging phenomenological identical objects).

5. Requirements for a psych. theory of motions:
 - (a) that they trace the connectedness between the Ego and an object (except such rather pure states like a feeling of well-being).
 - (b) that the relation between object and emotion should be necessary, not simply contingent (i.e. not simply S-R).
 - (c) must not overstate the ego relatedness of the emotion at the expense of object requirements
 - (d) it must recognize that emotional qualities are phenomenologically part and parcel of the object, i.e. there are tertiary or physiognomic characters (e.g. round angular symmetrical open: fast and slow, rough and smooth; graceful and clumsy; cheerful, glowering, radiant, gloomy).

6. Physiognomic characters belong to extended wholes, not parts or points. They are tertiary, but not all tertiary are physiognomic. The empathy theory attributes these qualities to the self – but the self is itself a phenomenological datum and hence the riddle remains of how it gets these qualities in the functionally objective is no difficulty for the theory, e.g. stroboscopic motion.

7. To understand the Ego-object relation, it is necessary to postulate a third inclusive context. Within this one may infer varying degrees of intimacy Ego and ‘world’ or object.

Polarity

	Object-dominated	Ego-dominated	Field-characteristics
Ego-involved	‘artist viewing forest’	Father seeing son fall into water	Unified
Ego-detached	Engineer reading points	Spectacular viewing	Sharply polarized

8. A characteristic of a highly unified field is that self and objects are not entirely separated, and hence will tend to be full of physiognomic perceptions. Our civilization stresses a relatively high differentiation of the field and isolation of the ego with consequent poverty of physiognomic characteristics.

The more unified the field the more will a person behave with regard to this phenomenal world: “the physiognomic-characters will directly determine behaviour.” (p.226). The less unified the field, the more important is ego determination of action.