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The conceptual framework of psychology

Egon Brunswik

Abstract

Reviews the book by Egon Brunswik (see record 1952-05895-000). Physically this is a slim volume, hardly a book, rather, a monograph of barely a hundred pages. Intellectually this is the equivalent of three books or, to put it conservatively, of one well-sized book and two monographs of about one hundred pages each. Such condensation, to whatever extent it can be achieved at all, is no mean feat and, like every achievement, has its price. Brunswik pays in both style and vocabulary. His style is overly parenthetical and allusive, his vocabulary formidably polysyllabic. Frequent use is made of small print and, worst of all, of an overelaborate terminology. All this has marred my pleasure. There is, first, a reasoned statement of the logical positivists' analysis of psychology. Intermediate between epistemology and science proper in generality, this analysis belongs to what is now known as the philosophy of science. Since the

Encyclopedia in which Brunswik's piece appears is an enterprise in this area, one might have expected him to devote all the space at his disposal to that theme. Had he followed this course, his statement of the position would probably have benefited. The second theme, or the second monograph the author might have written, is a piece of advocacy for a special line of research. Now Brunswik, who is a psychologist as well as a philosopher, is entitled to his opinions or hunches as to which kind of research is at the moment most promising. Yet, I cannot help feeling that the way in which he closely intertwines logical analysis with advocacy is most unfortunate. The abstract of a book that is, thirdly, embedded in these hundred pages is a structural history of systematic psychology since Wundt and Brentano. On the basis of the evidence presented, it is safe to say that few, if any, are better qualified than Brunswik to undertake this arduous task. But even structural history is a dangerous weapon in the hands of a man with a cause. (PsycINFO Database Record (c) 2006 APA, all rights reserved)

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