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Craik, Environmental Psychology, New Directions in Psychology

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**"Environmental Psychology," 4 New
Directions in Psychology (T. Newcomb, Ed.)**

By

KENNETH H. CRAIK

New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston. 1970

Pp. 1-121, \$3.95

The reader of this review will be pleasantly surprised, especially if he is aware of certain strong current trends in academic psychology. Throughout the some 100 pages of his discourse, Craik stresses emphatically that the "subject matter of environmental psychology is human behavior *as it relates to*" the multifaceted aspects of the environment in various unique ways. Although for a long time psychologists have been concerned about environment in fairly limited approaches—studies in ethology, the "nature-nurture" controversy in intelligence, effects of groups on behavior, etc.—and although interest in man-machine relationships have commanded much recent attention, Craik's approach extends far beyond the atomistic concepts acquired by many psychologists trained nowadays in an unfortunately constricted manner. He advocates much more "molar" or global considerations. (The "molar" approach was stressed for a time by the great Kurt Lewin in his "field theory," but the latter has unhappily fallen into neglect of late, with some few exceptions.)

Craik contends this approach has actually been with us a very long time: "The idea of a designed earth embodies the apprehension of harmony and holistic patterning in the relations among man, the other species, and the earth. The idea is itself in harmony with traditional religious thought in Western culture, and contemporary formulations of human ecology may signify its emergence in a more secular form." While one may quarrel with the fact that the idea of a "designed earth" is in "harmony" with traditional Western religious concepts (consider for a moment the materialistic acquisitiveness derived from the Protestant ethic and its implications for a controlled ecology), it always comes as a surprise to this reviewer that the recent "emergence in a more secular form" of interest in ecology arrived about a century after the biology of Darwin and the philosophy of Spencer!

Craik reviews a number of imaginative studies which ask questions such as the following: Must not environmental designers have more comprehension of psychic needs of their clients? What behaviors may one expect when one systematically measures and varies a designed

environment (e.g., behavior of psychiatric ward patients, of visitors in a museum, etc.)? What is the influence of housing arrangements on interpersonal relationships? He believes that using environmental design for attainment of socially desirable outcomes puts it in the company of such traditionally powerful manipulative techniques as education and psychotherapy. He discusses potential effects of such factors as space, location, color, position, geography, meteorology, and other humans. One study he reports on the unrealistic expectations of future flooding of individuals living in high-flood probability areas indicates the futility of a study of human ecology without some comprehension of inner personal motivations.

An outstanding feature of Craik's discussion is his own research paradigm for comprehension of "environmental displays," which he designates as units of the molar environment involving different kinds of people, presentations of the environment (e.g., photographs, TV), responses by individuals, and assessments of environmental dimensions. Two of his more engaging suggestions involve areas almost completely overlooked by test constructors such as an environmental personality trait inventory, and environmental attitude and belief scales (Urbanism, Pastoralism, Ecological Perspective, etc.). He is not at all dismayed by the complexity of his paradigm—after all, there is always the computer and modern statistical sophistication to help.

Craik gives us a glimpse into an intriguing future of a veritable gold mine of interdisciplinary research effort by environmental planners and concerned students of human behavior, not the least among whom are lawyers.

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