

Gestalt Theory in the Field of Educational Psychology: An example

Contribution to the
1st GTA Symposium in Helsinki, Finland,
Celebrating 100 Years Gestalt Psychology
September 29th, 2012

Gestalt Theory in the Field of Educational Psychology - Introduction

- Gestalt Theory (including Field Theory) as theoretical background for
- applications in interpersonal contexts
- is useful, but
- is no contemporary issue in the University education for prospective teachers

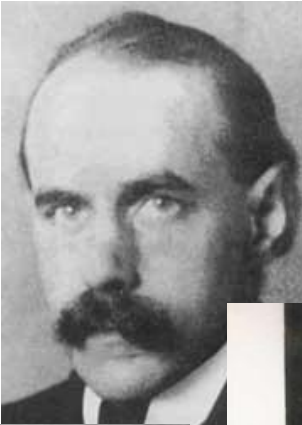
Gestalt Theory in the Field of Educational Psychology - Structure of the Talk:

- Introduction
- Gestalt Theoretical & Field Theoretical Basics for Prospective Teachers
- A Seminar at the University of Education
 - Circumstances and Preconditions
 - Topics and Schedule
 - What happened? Own Observations and
 - Students' Feedback
- Conclusions for Further Seminars

Gestalt Theory in the Field of Educational Psychology - Gestalt Theoretical Input for Prospective Teachers

- some Gestalt Psychological basics
- Epistemology: Critical Realism
- Phenomenological Orientation
- Gestalt Theoretical Anthropology
- Basic ideas on learning and education in the sense of Lewin and Metzger, concerning:
 - learning and thinking as creative processes
 - motivation
 - social climate
 - characteristics of working at the living

Max Wertheimer (1890-1943)



Wolfgang Köhler (1887-1967)



Kurt Koffka (1886-1941)



Kurt Lewin (1890-1947)



Wolfgang Metzger (1899-1979)



A Seminar at the University of Education: Circumstances and Preconditions

- Title: Gestalt theory and Field Theory in the context of education and development
- Participants: 35 young women, 2nd-6th sem.
- Pre-information about Gestalt Theory: ☹️
- basic motivation: one more seminar, collecting ECTS-points
- short preparation time

A Seminar at the University of Education: Schedule

- Introduction + Organization (team formation, literature) + Input Gestalt theoretical basics (2 lessons)
- Consultation Time (2 lessons)
- Presentations + Discussions (7 lessons)
- Feedback (1 lesson)

A Seminar at the University of Education: Presentation of 7 Special Topics based on Gestalt Theory

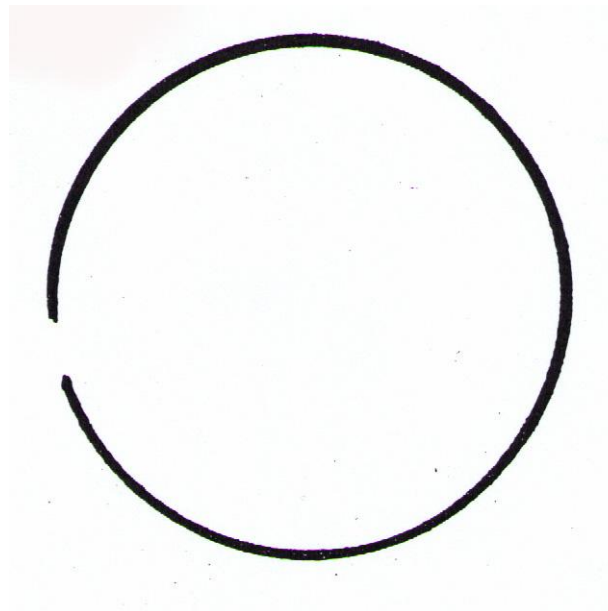
- creativity and productive thinking at school
- motivational factors, learning and achievement
- classroom-management, relationships and group dynamics
- diversity and social inclusion in the classroom
- development psychological ideas
- a special topic: resistance (“Trotz”)
- self-care for teachers

A Seminar at the University of Education: What happened? – own phenomenology

- students interested in the presentation of the basics
- literature for introduction: frustrating
- group formation + literature research
- team presentations + discussions
- atmosphere
- quality of the presentations + essays

Illustration GT Basics: Prägnanztendenz

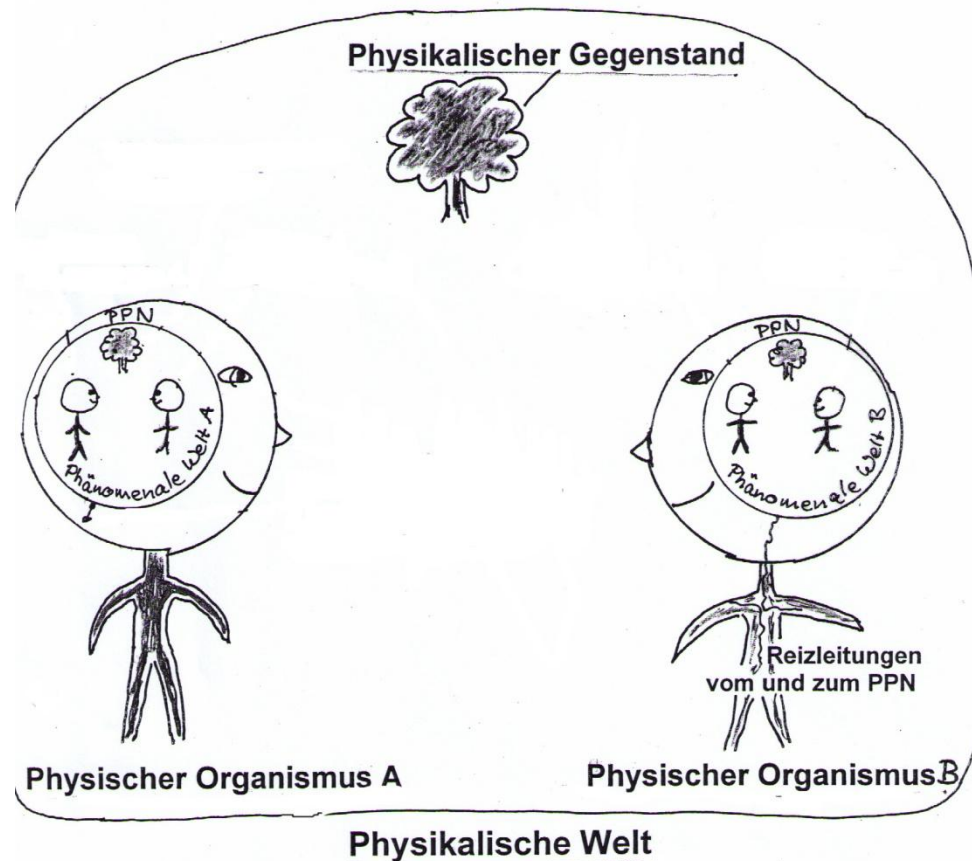
Beispiel für die Wirksamkeit der
Prägnanztendenz in der Wahrnehmung:



© Marianne Soff, 2009

Illustration GT Basics: Epistemology, Critical Realism

- „Die Systemgrenzen sind nicht die Grenzen des Einzelorganismus“ (nach Metzger, 1976³)



Darstellung
nach Tholey
& Utecht, 1989

Illustration: Motivational Factors

Lewin (1931) Die psychologische Situation bei Lohn und Strafe

I. Die Situation bei Interesse an der Sache

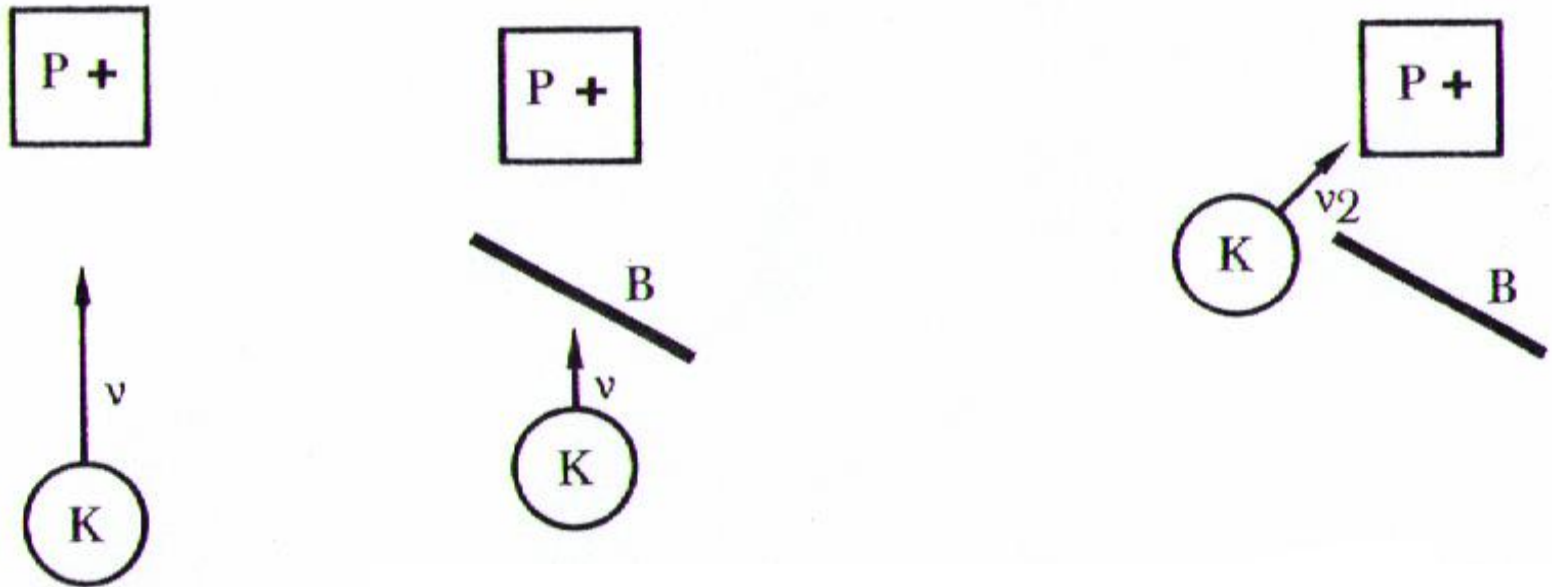
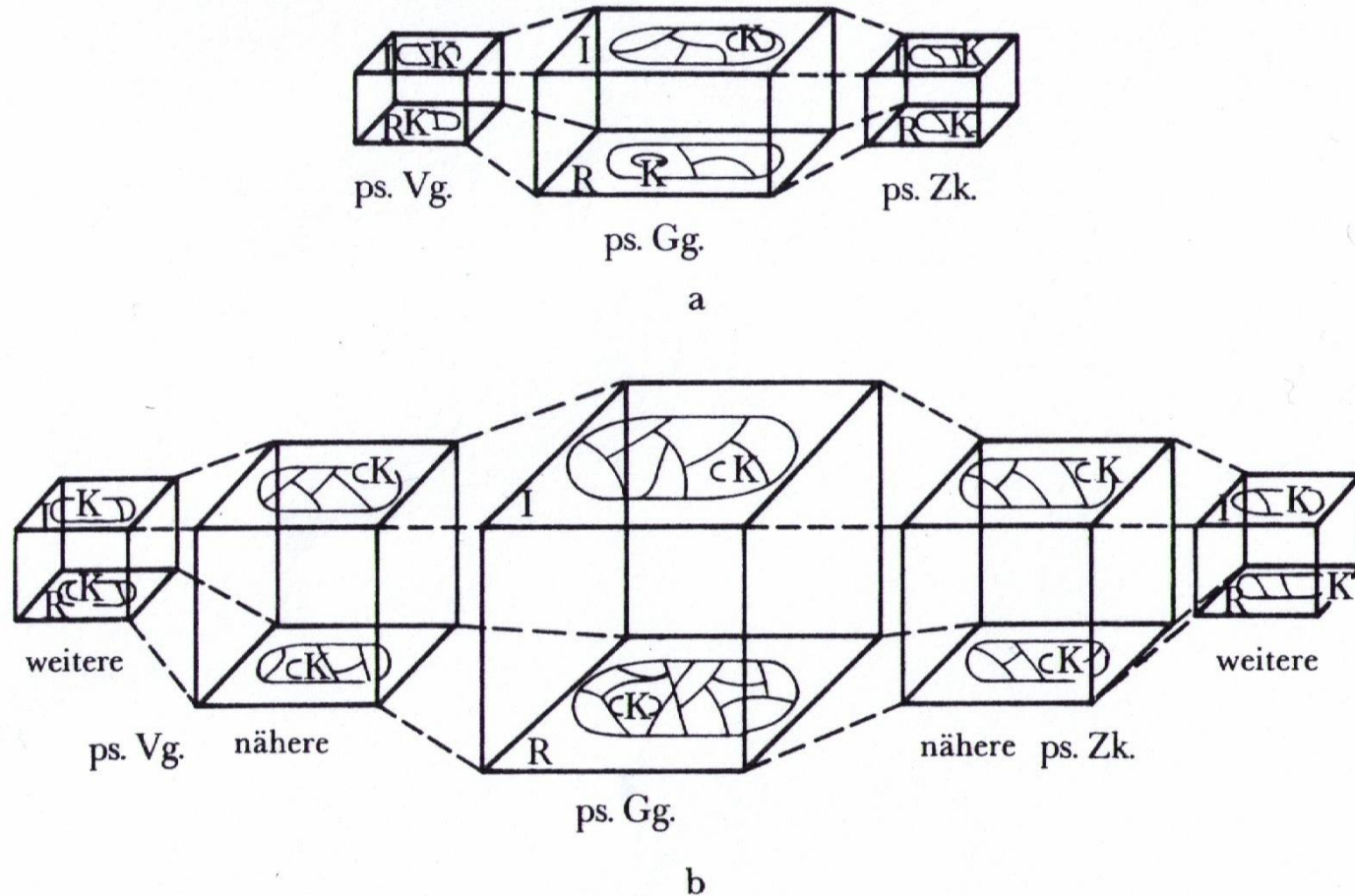


Illustration: Developmental Psychology

Lebensraum auf zwei Entwicklungsstufen



Quelle: Lewin (1946 in KWL Bd. 6, 385)

A Seminar at the University of Education: What happened? – own phenomenology

- students interested in the presentation of the basics
- literature for introduction: frustrating
- group formation + literature research
- team presentations + discussions
- atmosphere
- quality of the presentations + essays

Students' Feedback -1:

What was a New Content for You?

25 Feedback-Sheets, free answers:

- What is Gestalt Theory/Field Theory? (5x)
- Influence of GT/FT on psychology (2x)
- Critical Realism for teachers (2x)
- several aspects of developmental psychology (4x)
- motivation, facilitation of motivation (2x)
- self-care for teachers important to stay healthy (4x)
- “I learned that it is important to see my future pupils as a whole and not to judge on the base of a single impression”

Students' Feedback -2:

Your most Important Theoretical Insight?

25 Feedback-Sheets, free answers:

- Critical Realism (5x)
- GT/FT in general as a theoretical background, solutions and explications on a variety of school topics (3x)
- “The whole is not the sum of the pieces” (6x)
- “Prägnanztendenz” in each human being + groups, anthropological aspects (4x)
- Group leading, influence of educators (2x)
- how to deal with stress, anger, “Trotz”, prejudices at school (3x)

Students' Feedback -3: Seminar Atmosphere?

25 Feedback-Sheets, free answers:

- Good, agreeable learning climate (16 x)
- relaxed atmosphere (3x)
- open, frankly discussions (6x)
- target-oriented, concentrated, disciplined (4x)
- well-prepared presentations (3x)
- it could have been more productive, group puzzle method instead of plenary presentations (2x)
- “For me, the congruence between Gestalt theoretical ideas of human beings and the style of the seminar leader was obvious and therefore practised in the whole seminar”

Students' Feedback -4: Suggestions for improving?

25 Feedback-Sheets, free answers:

- better organizational structure/overview from the beginning (3 x)
- more time / more help for organization of the groups and preparation of the presentations: (6 x)
- more basic information at the beginning/more input lectures from the expert lecturer (7x)
- less students' presentations (5x)
- more information material in completion (6x)
- more integration, reflection, discussion after students' presentations (6x)

Gestalt Theory in the Field of Educational Psychology: –

Conclusions for further Courses

- GT & FT are obviously connective to a lot of contemporary discourses in the field of educational psychology
- GT & FT as theoretical frames for teaching and other processes concerning schools are interesting for young students
- seminar atmosphere with “model function”, at the same time a lot of ideas for improvement
- comprehensible wish of more lecturers input and support, but maintenance of active learning, self-reading, interactive teaching
- more time for questions and reassurement...

Invitation to the
18th Scientific Convention of the GTA
April 11-14, 2013

University of Education, Karlsruhe

www.gestalttheory.net/gta/tagung

Thank you
for your Attention!