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Original Article

An Open Letter to Hermann Rorschach

What Has Become of Your Experiment?

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Abstract. The Rorschach has become a cultural icon. Over the last century, Hermann Rorschach's creative experiment has imbedded itself in our society and captured the imagination of generations of clinicians, researchers, artists, writers, and the lay public in general. The author writes an imaginary letter to Hermann Rorschach, informing him of what has become of the inkblot experiment he began over 100 years ago. Inviting the reader to join in this imagined communication, the author recounts what became of some of Rorschach's colleagues and followers who promoted his test. The author informs Rorschach about the universal appeal of his experiment, along with the developments and the challenges to his inkblots since Rorschach's untimely demise in 1922. Along the way, the author raises some of the unsettled questions about the nature and meaning of task, before closing by highlighting key aspects of the enduring legacy Rorschach left behind.

Keywords: Hermann Rorschach, letter

November 8, 2013. The Google Doodle for the day featured a cartoon image of the Rorschach. Google commemorates special dates with a symbol, or Google Doodle, signifying the universal meaning and importance of that date. On this occasion, it was the 129th anniversary of the date of birth of Hermann Rorschach, November 8, 1884. Thus, Hermann Rorschach's 129th birthday, not the centennial of his birth, nor the bicentennial, but his 129th birthday was deemed significant enough for the international, mega-search engine, Google, to mark this occasion. In a more general sense, Google's commemorative doodle reflects the imprint that the Rorschach has left on modern society. What would Hermann Rorschach think of all of this?

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Over the years, Rorschach and his blots have never drifted too far from the collective consciousness of our culture, being written about, depicted in art, and parodied in movies and on television. Sometimes the Rorschach Test, itself, is the subject of attention, while at other times the word *Rorschach* is used to represent something that is interpreted, ambiguous, unknown, mysterious, and possibly even sinister and threatening to some. Akavia (2013) eloquently discussed the cultural fascination with the Rorschach. Whether used as a colloquial expression or employed as an iconic inkblot image, Akavia termed the Rorschach a “potent metaphor and a malleable icon for post-modern subjectivity” (p. 172).

Writers publish pieces in the popular press regarding controversial issues about the use of the Rorschach as a diagnostic instrument (Olin, 2003; Berson, 2009). Other writers invoke the word *Rorschach* in the titles of their articles to symbolize anything that mixes the psychological with the uncertain, controversial, and ambiguous (Bennett, 2015; Eban, 2007; Geyer, 2001).

Although artistic renderings of inkblots predated the Rorschach (Kerner, 1890; Rosenzweig, 1944), contemporary artists are drawn to the Rorschach and continue to experiment with the structure of inkblot images in their graphic art (Anker, 2008; Matte, 2007; Primus, 2004; Warhol, 1984). Given the influence of art in the life of Hermann Rorschach (Akavia, 2013; Ellenberger, 1954), it is fitting that so many artists have turned to his inkblots as inspiration for their creations.

Graphic novelist Alan Moore relied on the Rorschach as inspiration for his fictional character named “Rorschach,” in his series called *Watchmen* (Moore, 1986). Moore’s Rorschach character wears a mask that looks like a constantly changing inkblot, no doubt based on the ambiguous designs in the Rorschach inkblots. Interestingly, Moore portrayed his Rorschach figure in such an ambiguous way that it was never clear whether he was a good guy or a bad guy, a masked adventurer or a mentally deranged crime-fighter. It was thus left to the reader to interpret what kind of character this Rorschach might be.

In 1999, a group of theater artists founded the Rorschach Theater in Washington, DC. Their mission statement reflected a similar attempt to allow the audience to use a stimulus to create an experience. The mission statement of the Rorschach Theater refers to the “uncommon uses of environment and intimate passionate performances” to “lure its audiences beyond the limits of ordinary theatrical experience so that they

may discover new elements of their own humanity” (<http://www.rorschachtheatre.com>).

As mentioned, the Internet has embraced the Rorschach, along with the iconic image of Hermann Rorschach himself. Popular culture teamed up with social media and discovered that old photographs of Hermann Rorschach bore an uncanny resemblance to the international superstar Brad Pitt. If they have not already done so, readers may want to pause and Google *Rorschach* and *Brad Pitt* and await myriad sites displaying pictures of the two with captions such as, “separated at birth?”

Unfortunately, the amusement that some might feel regarding the online celebrity of Hermann Rorschach quickly turns, for many psychologists, to outrage at Wikipedia’s cynical decision in 2009 to publish pictures of all 10 inkblots, along explanations of how the test is given and interpreted for all the world to see (Wikipedia, 2009).

Whether displayed in art, depicted in literature, or present in online controversies, the ubiquitous presence of the Rorschach in our daily culture and the influence it has had the professional identities and practice patterns of many psychologists led the author to imagine what it might be like to write a letter to Hermann Rorschach about how his test has evolved in the 93 years since his death. Written in the first person, the following whimsical exercise follows the form of a personal letter to the man who set this professional and cultural phenomenon in motion.

Dear Dr. Rorschach,

In the 129th year marking the date of your birth, I wish to make you aware of what has become of your test, or, as I believe you called it your “Wahrnehmungs” or Perceptual Experiment (Schwartz, 1996). Although it may be 129 years since the date of your birth, the life of your inkblot experiment is a youthful 93 years old. Before telling you what has become of your experiment, where it has led, what has been done to promote it, and what has been done to condemn it, I mention what became of some of your close colleagues and mentors. You’ll pardon the pedantic nature of my letter, including its subheadings and citations; but I think it will help organize my thoughts and credit those who continued your inkblot experiment after you died.

First, we call your perceptual experiment “the Rorschach.” Ten inkblots, some with black and white, some with coloring, and others fortuitously shaded – your Rorschach has had a profound effect on the lives of countless numbers of people, patients, and practitioners alike, and has become a cultural icon.

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I'll begin by saying a few words about some of those who worked by your side and those who followed your path long after you left us. Much credit goes to your colleagues, mentors, friends, and pupils, Emil Oberholzer, Walter Morgenthaler, Georg Roemers, Hans Zulliger, and Hans Behn for promoting and teaching others about your experiment after your sudden death. In their tributes, they noted that you had the mind of a scientist, the heart of a healer, and the soul of an artist.

Oh, mention of your student Behn, reminds me that, in the year before your passing, you worked together to develop a parallel series of plates for clinical and experimental situations. You must wonder what became of this effort. The answer is – apart from the blots' value as a collector's item – “not a great deal.” Behn's version, (Behn-Eschenburg, 1921) bore remarkable similarity to the 10 blots that you created. Zulliger (1941) prepared a manual for Behn's series (also referred to as the Behn-Eschenberg Inkblots, Behn Rorschach, or Be-Ro), which presented information on a scoring system that was based on your approach. Unfortunately, the blots were reduced in size; and there were some differences in chromatic coloring (another printer's error?). You would be interested to know that the disappearance of Behn's series has not meant that parallel or alternative sets of inkblots do not exist. Rorschachers in Japan (Kataguchi, 1956), America (Holtzman, 1961), and Italy (Parisi, 1993) created their own series of inkblots to serve as either parallel forms or alternatives to your 10-blot set.

As for your contemporaries at the Burgholzli Clinic, Professors Eugene Bleuler and Carl Gustav Jung made profound contributions to the fields of psychiatry, psychoanalysis, psychology, mental health sciences, and religion. Dr. Bleuler, then and now, is regarded as an authority on dementia praecox, or schizophrenia as he later called it. I believe that he served as your teacher, dissertation sponsor, mentor, and, quite possibly your friend. In mourning your death, Professor Bleuler referred to your passing as an irretrievable loss for your family and science and stated that, “Herman Rorschach was the hope of an entire generation of Swiss psychiatry” (Schwartz, 1996, p. 15).

The esteemed Dr. Jung, former assistant to Bleuler, shared many of your interests; however, your paths diverged. In keeping with your artistic roots, you chose visual stimuli for your inkblot experiments, while Jung chose verbal stimuli for his word-association test. He saw

his word-association experiment as means to uncover repressed contents of the mind, while you employed your inkblots to reveal the structure or form of the personality. Jung labeled his personality types “introverted” and “extroverted,” while you renamed your experience types (or “Erlebnistypus”), “introversive” and “extratensive.” In your text, you emphatically stated that your concepts had “almost nothing except the name in common with Jung’s” (Rorschach, 1921/1942, p. 82). With all due respect, your distinction left many who followed you quite curious about the nature of your relationship with Jung and the basis for your emphatic distinction between his ideas and yours (Akavia, 2013; Bash, 1955; Ellenberger, 1954; Keddy, Erdberg, & Signer, 2014; Pichot, 1984).

For all we know, you may have never really met Professor Jung; but we find evidence that you attended some of his classes (P. Keddy, personal communication, April 15, 2015). Unlike you, Jung lived long enough to comment on your “relationship” (Bash, 1965). He apparently said that he did not know you, and that you never bothered to approach him (P. Keddy, personal communication, April 15, 2015). Some have wondered whether you might have felt intimidated by his reputation or manner, and that this might have prevented you from approaching him for collaboration on your project (Müller & Signer, 2004; P. Keddy, personal communication, April 15, 2015). I find this a shame because such collaboration might have enriched all of us.

Both of you repudiated Freudian orthodoxy; but while Jung broke crisply with Freud, you maintained official ties with the Swiss psychoanalytic establishment and became the first vice-president of its psychoanalytic association. Some have conjectured that you sought to remain faithful to your friend and mentor Dr. Oberholzer, himself a Freudian loyalist and the first president of the Swiss Association, while you privately rejected some tenets of Freud’s theories (Schwartz, 1996). However, in the end, these conjectures have the speculative quality of an inkblot interpretation.

What you shared with both Bleuler and Jung was a legacy that lives on long after your passing. However, both of these giants lived well into their 80s. You lived less than half the time that they were able to work, teach, write, and evolve as major thinkers of their time. Thus, we are left with profound regret and imponderable speculation about how your ideas about your experiment, psychoanalysis, neurosciences, schizophrenia, art, and culture may have evolved had you

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lived longer. What saddens me most is that you would never have the chance to know about the vast reach of your inkblot experiment.

The Blot Seen Around the World: The International Reach of Your Experiment

What began as your long fascination with inkblots, first as a game, then a scientific tool for investigating reflex hallucinations, and ultimately as a diagnostic test based on perception, your inkblot experiment has become a worldwide phenomenon. Carried from teachers to students, your Rorschach method spread rapidly across the globe and attracted an international band of followers all through Europe, and into Israel, Turkey, and Russia, in Japan, throughout South America, Mexico, Cuba, Canada, and the United States. These were the students of your students who became the teachers of our teachers. Many followed your method closely, while others deviated, modified, elaborated, and developed unique systems to fit their cultural and scientific traditions. Many persevered despite the same kind of searing opposition and withering criticism from the academic and scientific community that you experienced after you published your *Psychodiagnostik*.

Have They Come to Praise or Bury Your Experiment?

When you published your text, you were criticized by members of the Swiss academic community. In speaking about your experiment, John Exner (1969, 1974, 1993), an American psychologist and one of your greatest modern day followers, commented that:

There are those who regard its worth with contempt and have advocated its complete abandonment. Many others defend the technique purporting it to be the most effective of the projective devices. While the controversy has raged, the test has not only survived but flourished even more intensely in the skilled hands of the practitioner.... (1969, p. vii)

Dr. Exner wrote these words nearly a half a century ago, 60 years after you first began experimenting with inkblots. Exner's comments captured the sharply divergent, sometimes impassioned, debates and criticisms about your work, with members of the academic community from the 1950s to the 1960s regarding is as unscientific and cult-like. Critics began to lambast your test and call for its end. In part, some of this criticism was probably deserved because in the 1940s and 1950s, the Rorschach was treated as an oracular

instrument, which could unveil the hidden mysteries of the mind, as well as reconstruct the psycho-genetics of the patient's developmental history. Although I will never know for sure, I think you would have objected to this kind of interpretive over-reach yourself. In any event, as a result of its idealization and diagnostic overstretch, it was only natural that skeptical voices would emerge. And they did, repeatedly, and in many languages.

At the time Exner wrote these words, we were in the midst of a Rorschach "Game of Thrones," in which multiple fiefdoms had developed through the 1940s and 1950s, each representing a different approach to your test or experiment. Exner realized that your Rorschach procedure had become fractured by the multiple ways in which it was conceived and utilized. The existence of myriad approaches and outdated empirical support only gave more weight to the critics, who were calling for an end to your experimental test.

Although there were others who tried to bridge the gulfs between these different cultures and approaches, there was no-one more dedicated to integrating these disparate Rorschach schools than John Exner. Together with his colleague Irv Weiner (2003), Exner worked tirelessly to integrate the disparate systems into a single comprehensive Rorschach system, which would breathe new life into your beleaguered test (Exner, 1974, 1993). However, what Exner may not have anticipated after he set in motion an empirical grounding of your experiment, was that the critics, who called for the termination of your technique, would rise with fury again in the 1990s and early 2000s. Dr. Rorschach, each time this has recurred, and it will occur again, there are those among us who will respond to the critics with persuasive arguments and compelling scientific and clinical evidence for the utility of your experiment. What might this be? Apart from the chorus of critics, the problem is that you left us too soon. Your premature death left many unanswered questions about you and your experiment. No doubt, had you lived longer, your ideas would have evolved and would have developed a broader theory to help explain your experiment. The fact that you were never able to do this left a void. In fact, your creative psychological experiment with its simple instruction "What might this be?" echoed in the minds of generations of Rorschachers (that's how we refer to ourselves), who have attempted to respond to a set of related queries: (1) What should we call this?; (2) What is the nature of the task?; and (3) What might the responses mean? I turn to each.

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Test, Technique, Method: What Should We Call This?

Although you originally referred to this as an “experiment,” you eventually referred to it as a diagnostic test. It has been nearly 100 years since you published your book *Psychodiagnostik* (1921/1942), and quite frankly, Dr. Rorschach, we’re still not settled on how best to refer to your creation. I would venture to say that almost no one refers to it as an “experiment” or themselves as “experimenters” when they administer the inkblots to a patient. Most call it a “test,” or psychodiagnostic test, which is how it is marketed. However, some felt that it lacked the scientific characteristics of a true objective test and should be called a technique, which had more of a subjective, clinical connotation. Nowadays, we know that your Rorschach meets strict criteria of a test that yields empirically sound, objective information, but still has properties of clinical technique that can reveal what is most unique and idiosyncratic about an individual. Still others have used the term “method” as a way of capturing both the empirical and clinical aspects of the inkblot procedure (Helman, 1959; Minkowska, 1956; Weiner, 1994). Now, the term performance assessment system has surfaced as another way to describe your test, technique, or method of experimenting with inkblots (Meyer et al., 2012). Between you and me, many here today probably go back and forth between all of these terms. Yet even if we agree (and we really don’t) on a name for your experiment, we face a second question regarding the nature of your experiment.

The Nature of the Task: What Might This Really Be?

The theory underlying the nature of your experiment has remained elusive. Much like the veil that has kept us from knowing more about who you were, the essence of your Rorschach test or method, itself, has remained enigmatic, the proverbial 11th inkblot, if you will. Psychologists have grappled with the essential nature of your inkblot experiment and the psychological processes underlying individual responses. You introduced it as a psychological experiment in the interpretation of accidental forms, which you said fell in the field of perception. As such, you were interested more in how the subject perceived and interpreted the blots and less in what they perceived. In fact, you called it “a diagnostic test based on perception.” Association was also a part of the perceptual process, but by association, I believe you meant the process by which a person, after perceiving the inkblot, makes associative linkages to existing ideas and images stored in memory.

Many who followed you strictly adhered to your perceptual explanatory formulation as the basis of your diagnostic test. Like you, they saw the test as one of perception and downplayed the importance of response content. These followers stood by your notion that personality was best described from how the subject responded to the objective perceptual features of the inkblots, not what he said they looked like. Some, like David Rapaport, extended your perceptual model so that, initially, perception of the inkblot leads to associations and ideas that contribute to how the blot is organized in one's mind (Rapaport, Gill, & Schafer, 1946/1968). Then, secondary perception plays a role in judging how well the associative images fit the perceptual contours of the blot.

Despite the tradition of the perceptual-associative approach, a growing chorus of voices wanted to pay more attention to what the individual saw, not just how she saw it. Thus, for many, the content of the responses and, more importantly, the themes that were symbolically represented by response content provided a rich source of information about the individual's inner life, including unconscious feelings, needs, wishes, and fantasies. Although you initially seemed to dismiss an approach that treated content as an important basis for interpretation about personality, let alone unconscious processes, it sounds like your thoughts about this might have been changing shortly before you died.

Soon the term *projective* test was applied to your diagnostic test of perception (Frank, 1939; Rapaport, 1942; Schactel, 1966). The argument was that the accidental forms of your inkblots allowed people to project their inner world of feelings and personal meanings onto the inkblot plates. Some accepted your inkblots as a projective test, but, concluded that what got projected were less unconscious fantasies and feelings but the enduring structures that made up the organization of the personality (Rapaport et al., 1946/1968).

Unfortunately, some users of the test became so enamored with interpreting content and associating it to unconscious dynamics that they minimized or, worse yet, lost sight of the importance of perceptual features. Over time, most practitioners came to their senses and realized that both the "how" and the "what" were indispensable aspects of the response process.

With the "what might this really be" issue never having been completely settled, the question of the nature of the response process and

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underlying theory of the test resurfaced again in the 1990s in the work of several Rorschachers, who respectfully challenged the perceptual model and posited something new. Sidney Blatt (1986) and Martin Leichtman (1996) argued that your Rorschach method is less a test of perception, *per se*, but more a procedure to study the ways in which an individual forms mental representations and constructs meaning. Unfortunately, their arguments have not attracted the attention they deserve or really changed how most people understand the fundamental nature of your inkblot experiment.

In an incisive treatise on the nature of your inkblots and their role in the “what-might-this-be” process, Peterson and Maitland-Schilling (1983) challenged the long-held belief that your inkblots were inherently unstructured or ambiguous. The authors conclude that procedures like your inkblot experiment provide a forum for the person to “reveal the inner world in the process of modifying, misperceiving, and elaborating a controlled sample of reality, i.e., the test stimuli” (p. 272). Like Blatt and Leichtman, Peterson and Maitland-Schilling suggest that the inkblots provide an opportunity to represent or create something, and not just perceive it. However, they also note that the subjunctive mood of your instruction “what might this be?” invites the participant to play with possibilities, or in their words, “to play with the stimulus, to modify fact, to forsake the literal and the concrete, and to toy with the stimulus” (p. 267).

Dialectics of Interpretation: What Might This Mean?

Rorschachers tended to associate with a number of camps, each claiming that they had discovered the “religious truth” about the right way to interpret the inkblot data. I already noted some tension between those interested in the form of the response versus those interested in thematic content. Over time, we have witnessed mutual challenges and criticisms between scientists and clinicians, and relatedly between empiricists and conceptualists. There are debates between nomothetic versus idiographic uses of the test. Rorschachers have argued whether to use theory or remain atheoretical when interpreting Rorschach material, leaving some to feel that they must take sides and choose to align themselves with either the empirical or the conceptual camp. Others have seen this as an artificial dichotomy, choosing the “both/and” instead of the “either/or.” One fine example of the blending of the empirical and psychodynamic approaches

can be found in a 1997 edited volume, entitled *Contemporary Rorschach Interpretation* (Meloy, Acklin, Gacono, Murray, & Peterson, 1997).

Truthfully, some of the dialectical nature of the interpretive task might have had something to do with the ambiguous richness of your character, which might have sown the seeds for the dialectical manner in which your inkblots were viewed and interpreted. You were first an artist and then became a man of science. You were an empiricist but treated patients psychoanalytically. You began your experiment with indifference to content and a stern warning that we could not infer unconscious elements of the mind from one's responses to the inkblots; however, just before you died, you suggested a "new angle of the test which may have great importance for psychoanalysis" (Rorschach, 1921/1942, p. 186). So, your inkblot experiment, like you, had elements of art and science, the clinical and empirical, and the theoretical and atheoretical. In essence, your complex, diverse, and seemingly contradictory span of interests, coupled with your premature death, contributes to the mystery and leaving so many wondering, "Who might you be?"

Finally, if theory contributes to our interpretation of your Rorschach, which theories lend themselves best to interpreting these inkblots of yours? If you had lived, would you have interpreted your test according to the prevailing psychoanalytic developments of the day? Some early followers did (Baer Bahia, 1949; Schafer, 1954) and many still do (Chabert, 2014; Lerner, 1998; Yazigi & Nashat, 2012). Your generation had but a single model of psychoanalysis to use as theoretical scaffolding for your interpretation. Today we have multiple offspring of Freud's drive-structure model, which include ego psychology, object relations theories, modern Kleinian approaches, intersubjective, self-psychological, attachment, and relational models, along with contemporary French psychoanalytic schools of thought that we have to choose from when we look to understand Rorschach material at a deeper level.

However, I'm curious about what you really thought about psychoanalysis then, and what you would think about it now. We know that you held office in the Swiss Psychoanalytic Society and, like many of your colleagues, practiced a version of psychoanalysis; however, it is also known that you did not think it necessary to be analyzed yourself, despite the encouragement from Oberholzer (Schwartz, 1996).

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In looking at your old correspondence with colleagues, some implied that you might have been more inclined to reject the theoretical over-reach of Freud and anchored your thinking more in empirical science (Pichot, 1984).

Ellenberger (1954) suggested that you were developing your method of inkblot interpretation in the direction of phenomenology. Acklin and Oliveira-Berry (1996) argued that you would not have developed your thought along psychoanalytic lines but were in the early process of developing your own theory of personality based on your ideas about kinesthesia, EB, and the capacity to experience.

However, at the end of the day, my dear Dr. Rorschach, this issue of what approach and which school of theoretical thought can claim you and your experiment is, after all, a meaningless exercise. Your followers would like to think that you would have approved of their theories, concepts, and approaches. However, what you would have ultimately come to believe, like so many of the details of your short life, are left unknown and subject to interpretation. I return to the work of Peterson and Maitland-Schilling (1983), mentioned earlier, because I think it helps us live with this puzzle. We, your followers, have played with possibilities, much like we do with the inkblots you created. The record of your life is incomplete and your ideas about your inkblot experiment remain somewhat ambiguous, which has invited us to toy with and shape the possibilities of who you were, what you thought, and who you might have become.

So far, Dr. Rorschach, I've taken a good deal of time bringing you up to date on how your experiment was broadly accepted, often criticized, sometimes idealized, and continually developed. Before I close, I'd like to mention three specific examples of your enduring legacy. Two are credited to your foresight, clinical acumen, and creativity. As for the third, we must credit the printer's error.

Chiaroscuro: Serendipity of the Printer's Error

Who among us cannot imagine your chagrin, irritation, anxious distress, and feelings of helplessness when you discovered that your original inkblot plates had been altered by the printer. Not only had they been reduced in size, but the colors had been altered! Instead of uniform tones of black and gray, there were varying degrees of saturation inside the blots. I imagine that you had paid for this job out of your salary and could not afford to have them reproduced. You had come so far, only for a printer's error to put

you off course. Fortunately, you soon discovered that an error could be a passageway through the darkness of the moment and lead to new perspectives and quiet insight. These accidental variations in coloring, or chiaroscuro, proved useful. Patients responded to them, much as they had to the form, color, and imagined movement that they saw in the blots. Between the time that your Psychodiagnostik was published in 1921 and your sudden death in 1922, you had begun to discover the diagnostic value of the chiaroscuro response. In that final manuscript that you prepared and presented a few weeks before you died, you gave us a glimpse of how you were beginning to understand these shading responses. Fortunately, Binder (1932, 1937), a “master of shadows” as he was later called (Bash, 1982), investigated and categorized these chiaroscuro responses. In time, other Rorschach progeny elaborated the scoring and interpretation of the fortuitous use of shading in the blots. Thus, we have the printer to thank for the error and you for your turning your anxiety into insight into how we might begin to understand chiaroscuro responses.

Movement: Kinesthesia, Imagination, and Empathy

In turning to kinesthesia, I wish you could have seen a beautiful book by Naamah Akavia (2013) entitled *Subjectivity in Motion*, which focuses on the concept of movement as it pertained to your experiment, your life, art, and the culture of your times. In historical tribute, Akavia skillfully traces the development of your career, your ideas, your inkblot experiments, and your fascination with how one can attribute movement to a static inkblot. Yet with heartbreaking irony, reminiscent of a Greek tragedy, Ms. Akavia, like you, passed away before her work was complete. Her untimely death and the posthumous release of her book are uncanny.

Nonetheless, in her well-researched investigation into the multiple meanings of movement, Akavia drew our attention to the personal significance of movement perception for you. Noting three prominent characteristics of M’s, creativity, imagination, and kinesthetic identification, or empathy, Akavia demonstrated how each of these was intrinsic to your character. She quoted a colleague of yours, who recalled in your obituary that you had a special gift for capturing and portraying characteristic human postures and movements, such as those of a musician or a patient working. Thus, she painted a personal portrait of the salience of the movement response for you, which was anchored in your own instinctual understanding and

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clinical communications with severely disturbed patients. Here, I recall how another of your followers, Paul Lerner, once comically, yet insightfully, mimicked positions of human figures in several of the cards. In his heart, mind, and soul, Paul, like you, embodied the Human Movement response. And also like you, Paul left us too soon.

Ninety-three years ago, you understood that the ability to see movement in a static inkblot requires “Einfühlung,” which means and capacity to “feel into” another object, whether it happened to be the emotional tone of a painting or the experiences of another human being. Nearly 100 years ago, you connected the Human Movement response with the capacity for empathy. How prescient. You would feel enlivened by current research that has linked the M response with the capacity for empathy and understanding another’s (Porcelli, Giromini, Parolin, Pineda, & Viglione, 2013).

Disturbances in Thinking: “The Liver of a Respectable Statesman”

You discovered that your inkblots were sensitive to fault lines in a subject’s thinking. You coded several types of responses, like the unforgettable “liver” response (Rorschach, 1921, p. 38). You demonstrated how these responses reflected thought disturbances, signaling the vulnerability to, or presence of, psychosis. There is probably no other aspect of your experiment that has held up and gained more traction than the area of identifying forms of disordered thinking and reasoning. Even the harshest contemporary critics (Wood, Nezowski, Lilienfeld, & Garb, 2003) identified the several well-validated variables associated with psychosis and thought disorder. Recently, a large-scale investigation by Mihura, Meyer, Dumitrascu, and Bombel (2013) using a technique called meta-analysis, showed once again that the Rorschach is a robust measure of features of psychosis, most notably disturbances in thinking.

Several Rorschachers identified, catalogued, and studied forms of thought disturbances in inkblot responses. David Rapaport introduced the category of “pathological verbalizations” (Rapaport, et al., 1946/1968), while Ewald Bohm (1958) developed the concept of “special phenomena,” to capture idiosyncratic ways in which some individuals perceived and interpreted the inkblots. Other followers further refined, systematized, and quantified Rapaport’s categories of disturbed thinking and applied rigorous scientific methodology to validating their diagnostic significance (Holzman, Levy, & Johnston, 2005; Kleiger, 1999).

An Open Letter to Hermann Rorschach

In closing, this is your legacy. In the end, we have what you left us, a rich and ineffable experiment that remains something of a mystery that no one has completely solved. We simply have 10 blots of ink, ...some with black and white.... some with coloring....and others fortuitously shaded.... So, dear Dr. Rorschach, you have awakened our curiosity, challenged our intellects, and stimulated our imaginations. Thank you. I would like to let you know that your “Wahrnehmungs experiment” is in good hands. Your Rorschach “great grandchildren” will carry on and further develop your work. You set something in motion that is still moving. It will not be stilled.

*With respect, admiration, and gratitude,
James Herman Kleiger*

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Summary

Startled by Google's decision to make the Rorschach the "Google Doodle of the Day" on November 8, 2013, the author reflects on the pervasive influence of the Rorschach in art, literature, and entertainment. The ubiquitous appearance of the Rorschach in our culture, as a controversial diagnostic procedure, an iconic inkblot image, a metaphor, and abstract concept, led the author to imagine the letter he would write to

An Open Letter to Hermann Rorschach

Hermann Rorschach informing him what has become of his inkblot experiment in the century since his death. Beginning with a brief review of the contributions of some of Rorschach's contemporaries, such as Bleuler and Jung, prefaced by comments on Behn and others' attempts to produce parallel or alternative sets of inkblots, the author then informs Rorschach about the universal reach, with accompanying criticisms, of his test across different countries and cultures after his premature death. The author goes on to point out that Rorschach's sudden death left a number of unanswered questions and ambiguities about his test, which have become Rorschach-like phenomena in their own right. Posing a series of "What might this be" questions, the author raises several areas of ambiguity that still remain regarding how we refer to the Rorschach, what we consider the essential nature of the task, and which theories best support our interpretations. For example, is the Rorschach a test, a method, a technique, or performance task? Is it best conceived as an empirical-nomothetic or idiographic-conceptual instrument? Finally, should interpretation be guided by theories outside the test itself, and if, so which theories are best suited for this? In this regard, the author wonders about Rorschach's beliefs about psychoanalysis and where his thoughts would have evolved had he lived longer, always reminding the reader that speculating about who Rorschach really was and what he might have become is like trying to interpret the proverbial 11th inkblot. The author closes his whimsical missive by noting Rorschach's enduring legacy and thanking him for discovering the diagnostic significance of chiaroscuro, human movement, and ideationally deviant responses.

Résumé

Surpris par la décision de Google de faire du Rorschach le «Google Doodle du Jour» le 8 Novembre 2013, l'auteur réfléchit à l'influence envahissante du Rorschach sur l'art, la littérature, et le divertissement. L'apparence omniprésente du Rorschach dans notre culture en tant qu'une procédure diagnostique controversé, une image de tache d'encre iconique, une métaphore, et un concept abstrait, a mené à imaginer la lettre qu'il voudrait écrire à Hermann Rorschach, informant ce dernier de ce qu'il est devenu son expérience de tache d'encre dans le siècle depuis sa mort. En commençant par un compte rendu des contributions des certains contemporains de H. Rorschach tels que Bleuler et Jung, préfacé par des commentaires sur les tentatives de Behn et d'autres de produire des séries de taches parallèles ou alternatives, l'auteur ensuite informe Rorschach de la portée universelle -avec des critiques qui l'accompagnent- de son test dans des pays et des cultures différents, après sa mort prématurée. L'auteur poursuit en indiquant que la mort soudaine de H. Rorschach a laissé un nombre de questions non-résolues et des ambiguïtés à propos de son test, ceux qui sont devenus des phénomènes Rorschachesque à part entière. En posant une série de questions de «Qu'est-ce que ça pourrait être?», l'auteur relève des domaines d'ambiguïté qui demeurent encore au sujet de comment on se réfère au Rorschach, qu'est-ce qu'on considère comme la nature essentielle de la tâche, et quelles théories soutiennent le mieux nos interprétations. Par exemple, est-ce le Rorschach un test, une méthode, une technique, ou une tâche de performance? Est-il le mieux conçu

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comme un instrument empirique-nomothétique ou idiographique-conceptuel? Finalmente, faut-il que l'interprétation soit guidée par des théories en dehors du test lui-même? Et si oui, quelles théories y sont les mieux appropriées? À cet égard, l'auteur s'interroge sur les opinions de H. Rorschach au sujet de psychanalyse et en quoi ses pensées seraient évoluées s'il avait vécu plus longtemps; toujours rappelant au lecteur que spéculer sur «qui était-il vraiment H. Rorschach» et «que serait-il devenu», c'est comme essayer d'interpréter la 11^{ème} planche proverbiale. L'auteur termine sa missive saugrenue en remarquant l'héritage durable de H. Rorschach et en le remerciant d'avoir découvert l'importance diagnostique du clair-obscur, de la kinesthésie humaine, et des réponses conceptuelles déviantes.

Resumen

Sorprendido por la decisión de Google de hacer del Rorschach el “Google Doodle del día” el 8 de noviembre de 2013, el autor reflexiona sobre la influencia constante del Rorschach en el arte, la literatura y el entretenimiento. El aspecto omnipresente del Rorschach en nuestra cultura, como un procedimiento de diagnóstico controvertido, una imagen de manchas de tinta icónica, una metáfora, y un concepto abstracto, llevó al autor a imaginar la carta que escribiría a Hermann Rorschach informándole qué ha sido de su experimento de manchas de tinta en el siglo desde su muerte. Comenzando con una breve revisión de las contribuciones de algunos de los contemporáneos de Rorschach, como Bleuler y Jung, precedido por comentarios sobre Behn y los intentos de otros para producir conjuntos paralelos o alternativos de manchas de tinta, el autor informa entonces a Rorschach sobre la repercusión universal, con las críticas de su prueba en diferentes países y culturas después de su muerte prematura. El autor pasa a señalar que la muerte repentina de Rorschach dejó una serie de preguntas y ambigüedades sin respuesta acerca de su test, las cuales se han convertido en fenómenos de Rorschach como con derecho propio. Exponiendo una serie de preguntas sobre “¿Qué podría ser esto?”, el autor plantea varias áreas de ambigüedad que todavía permanecen con respecto a cómo nos referimos al Rorschach, lo que consideramos la naturaleza esencial de la tarea, y cuáles son las teorías que le dan soporte a nuestras interpretaciones. Por ejemplo, es el Rorschach ¿un test, un método, una técnica o una tarea de rendimiento? ¿Es mejor concebida como un instrumento empírico-nomotético o ideográfico-conceptual? Por último, ¿debería la interpretación ser guiada por las teorías fuera de la prueba en sí, y si fuera así, cuáles son las teorías más adecuados para esto? En este sentido, el autor se pregunta sobre las concepciones de Rorschach sobre el psicoanálisis y dónde se habrían desarrollado sus pensamientos si hubiera vivido más tiempo, siempre recordando al lector que se trata de una especulación acerca quién realmente era Rorschach y en que podría haberse convertido, es como tratar de interpretar la 11^a proverbial mancha de tinta. El autor concluye esta carta imaginaria señalando el duradero legado de Rorschach y dándole las gracias por el descubrimiento respecto de la importancia diagnóstica del clarooscuro, el movimiento humano, y las respuestas ideacionalmente desviadas.

要約

Googleが2013年11月8日にロールシャッハの“Google Doodle of the Day”を作成する決定をした時点から始めて、著者はロールシャッハの芸術、文学、エンターテインメントにおける広範な影響を概観した。ロールシャッハのわれわれの文化においていたるところに表れるのは、物議を醸し出している診断手続きと反対に、アイコン的なインクブロットイメージ、メタファー、抽象概念は、筆者にヘルマン・ロールシャッハの死後世の間に、彼のインクブロット実験がどのようになったのかをヘルマン・ロールシャッハに知らせる手紙の想像を導いた。BleulerやJungといったヘルマン・ロールシャッハと同年代の人々に関する短いレビューから始まり、Behnのコメントによる前書きが記され、並行シリーズあるいは代替シリーズのインクブロットを作成しようとするところみ、その後著者はロールシャッハに、批判は伴っているものの彼の死後、多様な国と文化に彼の検査が幅広い範囲に広がったことを知らせている。著者はさらにロールシャッハの突然の死が、彼の検査についての多くの返答されていない疑問や曖昧さを残し、まさにロールシャッハ現象といわれる現象となっていることを続けて指摘している。連の“これは何ですか？”という質問を持ち出し、われわれがロールシャッハ法についてどのように及しているのか、この課題の何が本質的な特徴なのか、どの理論が我々の解釈を指示しているのかなどの曖昧さのいくつかの領域について著者はとりあげている。例えば、ロールシャッハ法は検査なのか、技法なのか、技巧なのか、課題達成なのか？実証的で法則定位的な道具であるのか、個性記述的という概念の道具なのか？ 後には、解釈は検査それの外にある理論に手引きされるべきであるのかどうか、そしてもしそうなら、これにもっとも適切な理論はどれか？その際、著者はロールシャッハの精神分析に関する信念について思案し、彼の考えは彼がもはや生きていない場所で進化しており、ロールシャッハは本当はどんな人物であり、有名な11番目のインクブロットの解釈をどのようにしようとしていたのであろうかと読者にあれこれ推測させたままであった。筆者は彼の取り止めのない書状をロールシャッハの尽きることのない遺産について及し、彼の明暗を配合した図版と、人間運動反応と観念活動の逸脱反応への感謝で締めくくっている。