

The Rorschach Test⁴

Description and Procedure. This is the well-known and widely used inkblot test, named after Hermann Rorschach, a Swiss, who began his experimentation with inkblots as a means of stimulating and testing imagination. He was not the first investigator to perceive the possibilities of inkblots in experimental psychology, although his work was the most extensive of any, having continued from 1911 to 1921. He is credited with being the first to develop a technique for their use in personality diagnosis.⁵ He also changed the emphasis from content analysis to determinant analysis, which is explained in the following pages. Rorschach developed his test and methods as a practical tool to be applied to clinical cases in the study of unconscious factors in perception and meaning, and to reveal dynamic factors of behavior and personality. He proceeded on the principle that every performance of a person is an expression of his total personality, the more so if the performance is concerned with non-conventional stimulus situations in response to which one cannot wilfully conceal his individuality. In responding to inkblots, the subject is generally unaware of what he reveals by the reports of what he sees. Yet, in telling what he perceives, he provides insights into his personality.

The Rorschach Test—used from the nursery-school level through adulthood—consists of ten cards, on each of which is one bisymmetrical inkblot. Five are in black and white with differently shaded areas. Two contain black, white, and color in varying amounts; three are in various colors (“chromatics”).

The cards are presented to the subject one at a time and in prescribed sequence. The instructions are very simple; the subject is asked, accord-

⁴ The purpose of this and the following chapter is to familiarize students with the essential characteristics of the instruments, their psychological rationale, their uses, and the major problems they present. Since the Rorschach and the TAT are prominent not only in psychology but also in anthropology, sociology, education and psychiatry, the student of the general field of tests and testing must have more than a cursory and fleeting glance at these instruments. The materials that follow are minimal for a reasonably adequate understanding of the characteristics and purposes of projective tests.

⁵ For a bibliography of early investigations, see J. E. Bell (12, pp. 75-76). See also Buros' several yearbooks on mental measurements, especially the fourth and fifth. The great bulk of research on the Rorschach has been published since 1935. For Rorschach's own thinking see (122). Rorschach's most literal interpreters are Oberholzer (123) and Beck (11).

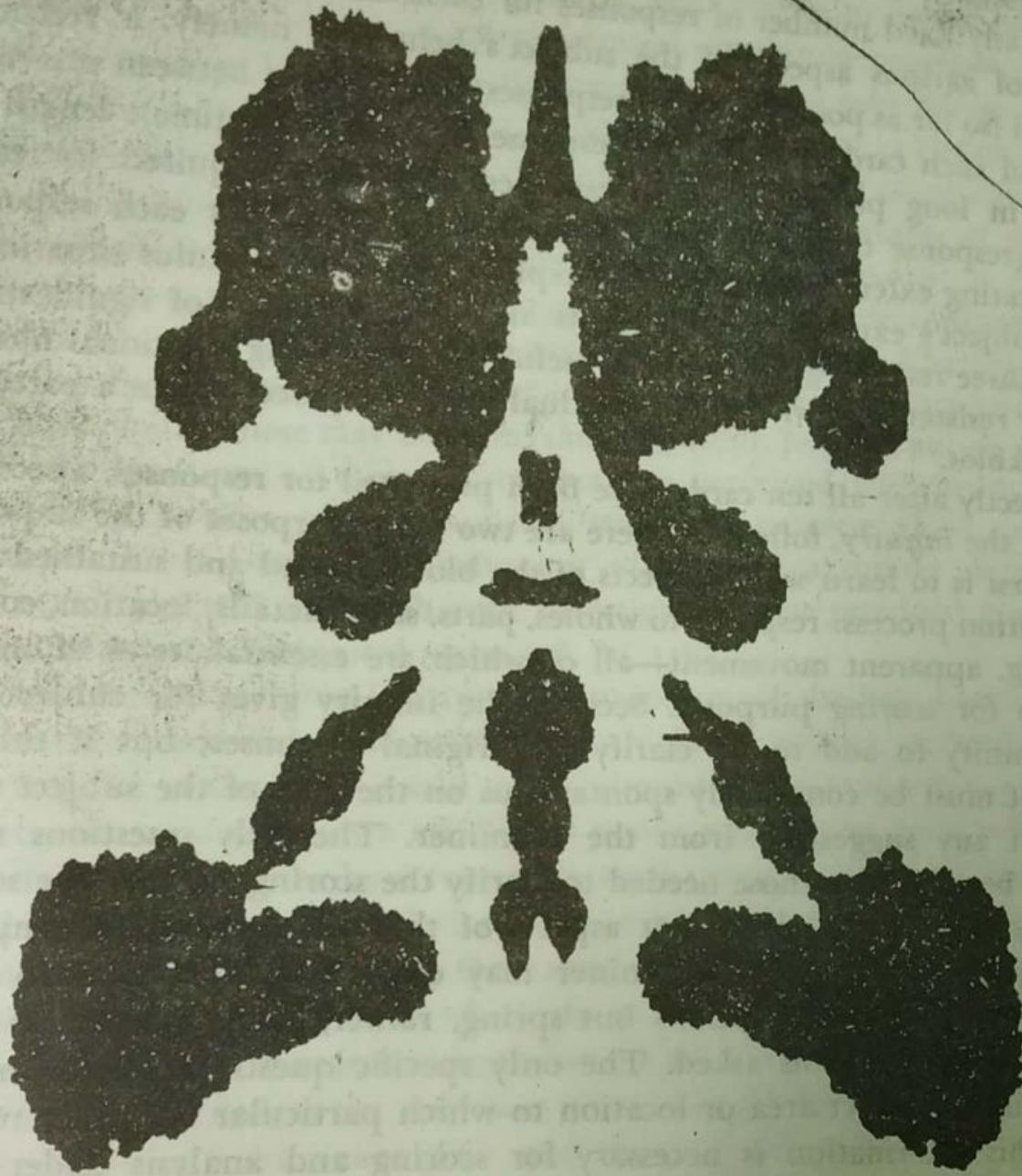


FIG. 25.1. An inkblot similar to the Rorschach blots.

ing to Rorschach's own formula: "What does it look like? What could this be?" Several clinicians and investigators, who have used the test extensively, have somewhat modified the original instructions, though not in their essentials. Klopfer and Kelley, for example, use this formula: "People see all sorts of things in these inkblots; now tell me what you see, what it might be for you, what it makes you think of" (79). The principal differences in the directions of the several specialists who have evolved their own formulas is in the amount of encouragement and

urging used to elicit from the subject the fullest possible response to each card.

Rorschach did not impose time limits; nor do present users. Nor is there any fixed number of responses for each card. The examiner makes note of various aspects of the subject's behavior: namely, a verbatim record (so far as possible) of the responses; time elapsed between presentation of each card and the first response to it (reaction time); length of time in long pauses between responses; total time required for each card (response time); position in which card is held for each response (indicating extent of the subject's exploration of the stimulus situation); the subject's extraneous movements and other behavior of significance. The three recordings of time are useful in determining emotional blocking or resistance to what the individual might be perceiving in a particular inkblot.

Directly after all ten cards have been presented for responses, a second phase, the *inquiry*, follows.⁶ There are two main purposes of the inquiry. The first is to learn which aspects of the blot initiated and sustained the association process: response to wholes, parts, small details, location, color, shading, apparent movement—all of which are essential items of information for scoring purposes. Second, the inquiry gives the subject an opportunity to add to, or clarify his original responses; but if this is done, it must be completely spontaneous on the part of the subject and without any suggestion from the examiner. The only questions that should be asked are those needed to clarify the scoring, so that the score will include all the significant aspects of the responses. Too many or leading questions by the examiner may elicit answers which do not represent his own perceptions but spring, rather, from suggestions implicit in the questions asked. The only specific questions asked are to determine the exact area or location to which particular responses refer, since this information is necessary for scoring and analysis under the several categories of the test.

Scoring. Following Rorschach's method for the most part, the scoring is based upon four major categories.

LOCATION. The first is the *location*, or the area, which has been perceived as the basis of each response. This may be the entire inkblot, a large portion, a small portion, a minute detail, or part of the white background. The area may be well defined, or merely vague and blurred. Location of responses is the basis of obtaining scores for wholes (called W), large usual details (D), and small usual details (d), unusual detail (Dd).

⁶ Some examiners prefer to conduct the inquiry immediately after the presentation of each card. Some users of the Rorschach have introduced occasional innovations of their own in administering and scoring, but these will not be described.

and the white spaces (S), which are parts of each person's pattern of response to the entire test. Additional symbols are used to designate other aspects of location; but these five are the major categories.

The locations of responses and the subject's ability to delineate them are regarded as indicative of his perceptual organizing processes, of his ability to analyze and articulate the parts, and of his associations as his perceptions shift within each blot. Analysis of responses in respect to location is said to reveal extent of the subject's perceptual organization or disorganization, measured in terms of agreement with norms of perception, and ability to analyze the whole and synthesize the parts.

DETERMINANTS. The second category includes the *determinants*, or characteristics, of the inkblot as perceived by the subject. The determinants are those aspects or qualities of the blot that have produced the responses to it. These may be *form*, *shading*, *color*, *perspective*, or *motion*—or combinations of them. Forms may be perceived with ordinary accuracy (F); or they may be unusual and clear percepts (F+); or poor percepts (F-). Generally, evaluation of form is a matter of the examiner's judgment, although some investigators have provided normative descriptions and numerical scores (78, 80, 116).

The frequency, intensity, and interpretation of shading noted by the subject are recorded. The manner in which the subject responds to the shading (K) of the blots is said to be relevant to the manner in which he meets and satisfies his own affective needs; whether by conscious denial of affective need, or by a repressive mechanism, or by insensitivity and undeveloped affective relationships with other persons.

With regard to color (C), the examiner records the particular colors reported and the manner in which the subject combines color with form, there being three categories: responses to pure color without form being involved (recorded as C); responses to a combination of form and color, in which form is dominant (FC); and responses to a combination of color and form in which color is dominant (CF).

A score for movement is given by most examiners when the subject perceives something going on in the blot, whereas Rorschach himself restricted the movement score (M) to responses that indicated empathy; that is, a true experiencing of, or identification with, the movement reported (obviously an extremely difficult phenomenon for the examiner to discern). At present a common practice is to reserve the symbol M for human movement, to designate animal movement as FM, and inanimate movement as m.

The subject's mention of perspective or depth (FK) is also noted and scored. Parts of the inkblots are perceived as having perspective and being three-dimensional. FK, "in reasonable numbers," is said to be related