

THE TPD APPROACH TO THE RORSCHACH

by

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Ladies and Gentlemen:

In my clinical practice as a psychotherapist, I apply Dabrowski's theory of personality, called theory of positive disintegration, or TPD, to interpreting Rorschach records. My approach to the Rorschach is then the TPD approach, i.e., an approach based on the theory of positive disintegration. Therefore, the questions I will discuss in this paper are: What is the specificity and originality of the TPD approach? What are its methodological basis, operational foundation and advantages? And how can its conclusions be verified?

The first question:

1) What is the specificity and originality of the TPD approach?

Resulting from the application of Dabrowski's theory of personality to Piotrowski's perceptanalysis, the TPD approach consists in interpreting traits, which are perceptanalytically disclosed in the Rorschach record, by the concepts taken from Dabrowski's theory, i.e. the concepts of personality developmental levels and psychic sensitivity. Two examples are the following.

If all M, FM and W-movements in a given Rorschach record are uniformly extensive, this means that, according to perceptanalysis, the testee is characterized by self-assertiveness, self-confidence and insensitivity to

cultural and moral values. Taking into consideration that Dabrowski attributed these traits to primitively integrated personalities, we say that the testee's personality is primarily integrated, or, in other words, that the testee presents the lowest level of personality development.

Another example: According to perceptual analysis, the M-blocked, or indeterminate responses (for example, "tug of war"), occur in the Rorschach records of intellectuals, having a good but inhibited intelligence. Inasmuch as intellectuals are respectively oversensitive and often hesitant in their judgements, we say, using Dabrowski's concept of intellectual oversensitivity, that the testees producing M-blocked in addition to being intellectually oversensitive are also intellectually ambivalent.

Thus, when applying the TPD approach to the Rorschach record, one uses Piotrowski's system of scoring, his rules of interpretation, the basic and amplified meaning he ascribed to the Rorschach formal components and content, but one expresses the amplified meaning of the components in terms of Dabrowski's concepts. That is the specificity and originality of the TPD approach.

The question that arises is whether the methodology of Piotrowski's perceptual analysis and that of Dabrowski's theory permit such an interpretation. Thus:

2) What is the methodological foundation of the TPD approach?

Piotrowski said:

"A trait disclosed in the Rorschach record may be interpreted psychoanalytically, sociologically, physiologically, educationally, or by a combination of concepts taken from different sciences. This neutral attitude toward different personality theories is no obstacle in taking advantage of ideas advanced by any theory of personality, as long as they are applicable to the interpretation of perceptual data." (Perceptual analysis, 1974, XIII-XIV).

Then, what is psychic sensitivity?

personality.

cepts in question as related to the horizontal and vertical dimensions of Rorschachiana. At this point, I will proceed directly to outline the concepts you, Ladies and Gentlemen; they are published in the last review of Because of a limited reading time, I will not present these referents to cal dimension of the testee's personality.

these concepts as an operational basis to ascertain the horizontal and vertical Dabrowski's concepts, the TPD approach uses perceptanalytic referents of As a technique in interpreting perceptanalytic data by means of

3) What about the operational foundation of the TPD approach?

theory may then be considered the methodological basis of the TPD approach.

The assumptions implied in Piotrowski's perceptanalysis and Dabrowski's

interpretation is not so much a methodological problem as a technical one. Rorschach records may be interpreted by Dabrowski's concepts and that such an to be drawn about his personality". (Ibidem, 10). This indicates that said: "Whatever the individual produces allows reliable and valid inferences thus, also in his reaction to the Rorschach plots more so that as Piotrowski tivity and developmental level manifest themselves in all his reactions; Dabrowski's theory hypothesizes that the individual's psychic sensi-

attempt.

The basic assumption implied in this quotation is that personality theories may be applied to interpreting perceptanalytic data. Therefore, perceptanalytic methodology presents no obstacle in incorporating Dabrowski's concepts to its procedures; on the contrary, it seems to favor such an

It is conceived, as a capacity to perceive and experience oneself and

sensual, emotional, imaginative or intellectual pattern or a combination of these patterns. This capacity can be of an average intensity as in the case of "average people" or of an enhanced intensity, as in the case of very

talented but nervous individuals. For example, somebody with a predominantly sensual sensitivity perceives and experiences quasi exclusively only the sensual aspect of reality. According to Dabrowski, the more diversified and enhanced the individual's sensitivity, the larger the horizontal dimension of his personality; i.e., the more multidimensional his perceiving and the deeper his experiencing, the broader his scope of interests, the more varied his abilities and capacities, the stronger his developmental potential; in short, the richer his psychic life.

By applying the perceptanalytic referents of psychic sensitivity to the testee's Rorschach record, we aim at ascertaining and identifying the horizontal dimension of his personality, or his psychic life.

By applying the perceptanalytic referents of personality development levels to the testees Rorschach record, we aim at ascertaining and identifying the vertical dimension of the testee's personality, or his humanness.  
What is meant by the developmental levels related to humanness?

They represent stages of transformation of the personality structure and its functioning. Dabrowski called them: primary integration, unilevel disintegration, spontaneous multilevel disintegration, directed multilevel disintegration and secondary integration on a higher level. These levels can be succinctly described in the following way.

At the lowest level (primary integration), there is no developmental transformation. Personality is organized around primitive drives; its

functioning is more or less biologically determined, as in the case of an infant.

At the 2nd level (unlevel disintegration), the structure of personality is loosened; the functioning is contradictory, inconsistent, conflicting, nervous and neurotic.

At the 3rd level (spontaneous multilevel disintegration), a hierarchicalization starts coming to the fore. The subject spontaneously perceives and experiences "what is" and "what ought to be" in himself and in his environment.

The 4th level (directed multilevel disintegration) is the level of conscious and deliberate reintegration of the structure and functioning of one's personality according to a self-directed principle of "what ought to be, will be".

At the 5th level (secondary integration), there is an identification of the subject with his personality organized more and more around his ideal. The subject is authentically human, autonomous, empathic and responsible. At this stage, "what ought to be, is".

In short, we would say that the five personality developmental levels correspond to five degrees of humanness.

My assumption is that knowing the vertical and horizontal dimension of the testee's personality in its structure and functioning allows us to really understand him/her as an unique human being.

4) How can we verify the Rorschach conclusions in the TPD approach?

Verifying Rorschach conclusions is a relatively simple procedure in the TPD approach. It consists in comparing the logical relation between the concepts with the relation between their referents, implied in the Rorschach conclusion. The degree of correspondence between these relations indicates the degree of validity of the conclusion. For example, according to the theory, there is an interdependence between the concept of spontaneous multi-level disintegration and the concept of emotional oversensitivity because it is impossible to attain this level of development without being emotionally oversensitive. If we find in a Rorschach record the referents of emotional oversensitivity and the referents of spontaneous multi-level disintegration, we may conclude that the subject is emotionally oversensitive and presents the 3rd stage which is of spontaneous multi-level disintegration. The degree to which the interdependence of the referents can be seen in the Rorschach is the degree of validity of the conclusion concerning the subject's sensitivity and developmental level. Moreover, this degree of interdependence of the referents points out the degree of validity of the concepts and of their perceptually referents.

If the positive correlation between the relations does not exist or is low, then either the concepts do not correspond to reality or their referents are inaccurate.

The verification of Rorschach inferences can also be accomplished by comparing them with the data of the subject's autobiography and/or interview. Having outlined the specificity of the TPD approach, its methodological and operational foundations as well as the way of verifying its conclusions, my last question is:

5) What are the advantages of applying the TPD approach?

Like other Rorschach systems, perceptanalysis can be considered a kind of "psychological microscope". This means that perceptanalysis gives us a picture of the testee's personality which resembles a non-arranged accumulation of psychological traits. In perceptanalysis there is no criterion enabling us to classify these traits or to explain their interrelationships or determine their role in personality structure and functioning. Perceptanalysis is not concerned with the question: "why is the individual the way he is". To be more than a "psychological microscope", perceptanalysis needs a personality theory which, as Piotrowski said, "is concerned with the making of personality". (Perceptanalysis, 1974, 36). Dabrowski's theory is pre-eminently that.

By applying Dabrowski's theory to the Rorschach record by means of the TPD approach, we can unify the disclosed traits into a concise description of the testee's personality. This description is centralized and arranged around his/her humanness and interior psychic life. It allows us to see more clearly the developmental potential and the developmental process of the testee's personality; to understand his/her behaviour; to foresee his/her reactions in times of stress and in ordinary life situations; to formulate a developmental diagnosis and prognosis; and to propose adequate recommendations of a prophylactic, educative and therapeutic nature.

Using the TPD approach equally makes it possible to specify some perceptanalytic conclusions. Let us take one example, that of "conscious self-control". Without taking in to consideration the testee's developmental level, this conclusion is ambiguous because it can have qualitatively different meanings.

Summarizing my paper, I would say that synthesizing Dabrowski's theory and Piotrowski's perceptanalysis in the TPD approach transforms the Rorschach into a test which makes it possible to ascertain the testee's level of humanness and the dimension and intensity of his/her psychic life. This enables the Rorschachist to multiply, widen, specify and justify perceptanalytic inferences. This also leads to a multidimensional and multilevel description of the tested individual's personality as well as to prophylactic, educative and therapeutic recommendations concerning the process of his/her human development. This finally opens up new vistas on Rorschach validation and research.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

6) Final remarks

Thus, the "conscious self-control" can signify the control consisting in the premeditation of the primarily integrated psychopath. It can also signify the control resulting from fear of consequences and consisting in inhibiting the expression of unacceptable impulses and feelings, as in the case of unlevelly disintegrated individuals. It can also signify a control by higher emotions, such as love, respect for human dignity or feelings of responsibility; this is the "conscious self-control" characteristic of higher developmental levels.