

Briefwechsel, Rorschach, Roemer, et al.

Since the response to my previous message on this subject was so bleak (not to say nonexistent) I decided I was not going to waste my time writing a follow-up, but the excitement while going through Rorschach's "Briefwechsel" (Correspondence: C. Müller & R. Signer Eds., by Huber from Bern 2004) is so strong that I just have to express it while sharing the information. With my still quite imperfect German I have already more or less read the main part of the book, by which I mean the correspondence from the time of the conception of the inkblot test and "Psychodiagnostics" (1917) to Rorschach's death in 1922. The whole volume collection (in itself only a selection) includes 231 pieces of correspondence from and with family members, colleagues (most notably E. Bleuler, W. Morgenthaler, E. Oberholzer, and G. A. Roemer) and the Editor of his book, spanning over 20 years, together with some interesting photographs of the main characters and some other pictures (blots, etc.). The collection in itself is very complete (although it brought a disappointment for me personally as there was no exchange available with H. Zulliger, his best disciple!). The editorial work (notes, literature references and cross-references, clarifications...) I find excellent. I will highlight the main points while sharing my personal reactions to the text.

I find the most important information I got from the volume was, paradoxically, what still rests awaiting publication in the Bern Rorschach Archives: particularly the 3 successive drafts or lectures from which the text of "Psychodiagnostics" derived and from which the chronological development of his ideas can also be reconstructed (letter 90, pp. 182-184) not to forget the complete book manuscript itself. That is before Rorschach had to cut off 32 pages for editorial reasons; as well as the dozens and dozens (likely more than a hundred) of test protocols interpreted mostly blind by the Master himself, which were asked for by and sent to him by the colleagues mentioned above and still many more others. These include not only pathological cases, but also comparative material from different professions, intellectuals, artists, politicians, soldiers, children, etc., and specially protocols of these colleagues themselves and of great men of that time like Albert Schweitzer! As stressed by Piotrowski in his book, this blind method was extensively used by Rorschach and from it he continuously refined his interpretive procedure. According to his own avowal he attained 75% correct conclusions. This material will suffice for two additional volumes, already claimed for by K. W. Bash 40 years ago (in his Foreword to Rorschach's 1965 "Collected Papers", still not available in English) together with this just published one; the volume of correspondence, the one on the manuscript material directly related to the publication of "Psychodiagnostics", and the one on test protocols.

I could also confirm in the text something Bash already realized and explicitly added in his above mentioned 40-years-old Foreword: the absolutely paramount scientific importance of the intensive exchange between Rorschach and his former disciple Georg A. Roemer (of whom I could finally see a photograph); if I may, I would perhaps

compare it with the Freud-Fliess exchange although I am maybe being unfair to Roemer since I have not experimented with his material. How could such capital scientific contributions remain unavailable for the wide public for so many decades, even after the acknowledgment of their importance? This intriguing character (deceased 1972: cf. pp. 164-166) initially truly played a key although afterwards - since he excluded himself - marginal role in the Rorschach movement, and safeguarded for (almost exclusively) himself many original ideas written by Rorschach in his letters to him, since he was from the beginning extremely inquisitive and very eager to master the technique: thanks to these traits of him we have today these detailed, theoretical and technical addendums to "Psychodiagnostics" (including, for the pleasure of people like Klopfer and Exner, new scoring categories), but also an interesting test protocol of H. Rorschach with his own plates (cf. Roemer, G. A. (1967): The Rorschach and Roemer Symbol Test Series; The Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease, 144(3), 185-197). Maybe, but just maybe, he was in a sense the reverse of a figure like Ludwig Binswanger (by the way it was a nice surprise for me to realize the level of exchange he did maintain with Rorschach): both realized immediately and more keenly than the rest the masterful scientific discovery of Rorschach and envisioned the success of the method we retrospectively very well know today, but while the former openly and unselfishly promoted its merits at the critical moment Roemer unsuccessfully tried to make profit of it for his own personal benefit stressing its shortcomings (for ex. of the standard 10 plates which he pretended to substitute with his own "improved" plates, or reversing the "erroneous" form/content emphasis) and presenting himself as the one who corrected Rorschach's course. As the Editors say, "one gets the impression that through his life he stood in a competitive relationship with Hermann Rorschach which, the longer his own success failed to happen, the sharper it accentuated". Interestingly enough, and in perfect symmetry to the above-mentioned Rorschach personal protocol, let me tell you that case #2 in "Psychodiagnostics" is not other than Roemer himself (letter 189, pp. 345-354), and already then Rorschach called to his attention his extreme subjectively based oppositionalism (5 S)!

From the point of view of my personal researches on the whole structure of the test series, there are some interesting indications about the reduction of the number of plates from 12 to 10, but not because of the Editor's (E. Bircher) decision like Ellenberger had suggested but because of Rorschach's own, although I would have loved more detailed explanations about his motives for doing so; anyway other passages still reinforce my reconstructive conception, following Ellenberger, of the "spatial" (left-center-right, on the model of the Experience Type) balanced structure of Rorschach's theoretical make-up and of the whole test (each plate, and the whole series of plates), visible in many Tables of "Psychodiagnostics" and particularly in the one accompanying Oberholtzer's case. And for my pleasure (and against your assumptions, Gérald!) there are also many confirmations of the mutual influence between Rorschach and Psychoanalysis (also stressed by the Editors, who insist on the similar character of the still unpublished material): the included personal opinions of Binswanger or of Ernest Jones (another nice surprise) on Rorschach's merits as a psychoanalyst are eloquent enough, despite Freud's own differing opinion!

Needless to say, this volume is a must for every self-respecting Rorschach expert: German-readers should rush to order it, and for the rest let's eagerly await for the translation(s) and for the shortly following publication of the rest of archival material - at least before another 40 years go by!

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