

## Defending in Court the Diagnosis of Psychosis with the Rorschach

Joel Dvoskin wrote:

"I am philosophically curious about something. (For those of you who've never been to law school, or watched PBS, this is a psychology example of the kind of **obnoxious questions** I used to ask my law students.)

Suppose, for argument's sake, that someone's "thinking" is measured with perfect accuracy by the Rorschach as floridly, completely, and egregiously psychotic. Suppose further that their behavior in all essential spheres, well observed and reported by numerous credible observers, is within normal limits. Are they mentally ill, or, more accurately, would you give them a diagnosis of mental illness, and if so, why?"

McIntyre's Reply

What does it mean that \*thinking is measured perfectly accurately\*? Do you mean that your example assumes that the R provides valid measures of psychotic thinking? By diagnosing mental illness or not, do you mean diagnosing psychosis or not? I will assume that you do. If the just noted assumptions were all true, I would reason as follows.

The R, although containing valid measures of psychosis, can still be incorrect in a given case as diagnostic validity of a measure means that the measure is capable of generating valid diagnostic hypotheses about an individual that can be inferred. These hypotheses are not identically associated with diagnostic facts about that individual. The diagnostic facts about the individual are what is directly observed, not inferred. In your example, the facts are that the individual is normal while the testing hypotheses encourage an inference that the individual is psychotic. In light of this contradiction between facts and hypotheses, I would go with the facts and not diagnose psychosis; reasoning that because the validity coefficient is never equal to 1.0, no matter how valid a test measure has been demonstrated to be in research, it must sometimes be incorrect in a given instant case.

When clear facts about one's functioning contradict the test measure, I would be persuaded that this is an instant case in which the test measure generated a false positive outcome. Were you to present an example containing the facts of observed functioning as not clear, or some observed oddness in functioning seemingly evident, and then I would be more inclined to make the inference suggested by the testing data which your example stipulates is valid, provided the hypotheses the testing data generates accounts for the ambiguity of observations.

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From: Robert McIntyre <robert.mcintyre4@GTE.NET>  
Subject: Re: How can you digress from the Rorschach?