

## **SOURCES:**

Blatt, S. J. & Ford, R. (1994). *Therapeutic change: An object relations perspective*. New York: Plenum Press (Appendix 6; pp. 267-269).

Urist, J. (1977). The Rorschach test and the assessment of object relations. *Journal of Personality Assessment*, 41(1), 3-9.

## **\*This version does not contain the revisions found in:**

Holiday, M., & Sparks, C. L. (2001). Revised guidelines for Urist's Mutuality of Autonomy scale (MOA). *Assessment*, 8, 145-155.

## **Mutuality of Autonomy on the Rorschach**

The Rorschach Mutuality of Autonomy scale was developed by Urist (1977) and is based on a developmental model that defines various levels or stages of relatedness based on a sense of individual autonomy and **the capacity to establish mutuality**. Rorschach responses are scored on this 7-point scale if a relationship is stated or clearly implied between animate (people or animals) or inanimate objects. A response is scored even if there is only one animate or inanimate object, but a relationship is clearly implied. Thus, an object that is a consequence of an action (a bear rug cut in half or a squashed cat) or has the potential for an action on another object (a nuclear explosion) is scored.

Urist (1977) defines seven scale points or levels for the quality of relations between objects:

*Level 1: Reciprocity-Mutuality; Collaboration-Cooperation.* Figures are engaged in some relationship or activity where they are together and involved with each other in such a way that conveys a reciprocal acknowledgment of their respective individuality. The image contains explicit or implicit reference to the fact that the figures are separate and autonomous and involved with each other in a way that recognizes or expresses a sense of mutuality in the relationship (e.g., "two bears toasting each other, clinking glasses").

At this level, the unique contributions of each individual object to the mutual interaction need to be emphasized. Thus, "two people dancing" would receive a 2, because there is no stated emphasis on the mutuality of their endeavor. To receive a score of 1, a response must have a special emphasis on the mutual but separate nature of a dyadic interaction. Each object must maintain its unique identity and contribution to a relationship in which both objects are mutually engaged.

*Level 2: Parallel Activity-Simple Interaction.* Figures are engaged together in some relationship or parallel activity, but there is no stated emphasis of mutuality. Despite the lack of direct emphasis on mutuality, the response still conveys the potential for mutuality in the relationship (e.g., "two women doing their laundry"). A response is

scored 2 when the integrity of the objects is maintained and there is a potential or an implicit capacity of mutuality, independent of the degree of logic, irrationality, or absurdity to the relationship.

*Level 3: Anaclitic-Dependent.* Figures are dependent on each other but without an internal sense of capacity to sustain themselves. The objects do not "stand on their own two feet;" rather, they each require some degree of external support or direction. The objects lack a sense of being firmly self-supporting (e.g., "two penguins leaning against a telephone pole").

*Level 4: Reflection-Mirroring.* One figure is seen as the reflection, imprint, or symmetrical image of another. The relationship between objects conveys a sense that the definition or stability of an object exists only insofar as it is an extension or reflection of another. Shadows, footprints, and so on would be included here, as well as responses of Siamese twins or two animals joined together.

*Level 5: Control-Coercion.* The nature of the relationship between figures is characterized by malevolent control of one figure by another. Themes of influencing, controlling, or casting spells may be present. One figure, either literally or figuratively, may be in the clutches of another. Such themes portray a severe imbalance in the mutuality of relations between figures. On the one hand, some figures seem powerless and helpless, while at the same time, others seem controlling and omnipotent. Themes of violation of an object's integrity through domination, or implied physical damage and destruction, are often present in these types of responses (e.g., puppets on a string, witches casting a spell, or a body cut open).

*Level 6: Severe Imbalance-Destruction.* There is a severe imbalance in the mutuality of relations between figures in decidedly destructive terms. Two figures more than simply fighting—such as a figure being tortured by another, or an object being strangled by another—are considered to reflect a serious attack on the autonomy of the object. Literal physical damage is seen as having occurred. Similarly, included here are relationships portrayed as parasitic, where a gain by one figure results by definition in the diminution or destruction of another (e.g., a leech sucking up this man's blood, two people feasting after killing an animal, a compression hammer splitting through rock).

*Level 7: Envelopment-Incorporation.* Relationships are characterized by an overpowering enveloping force. Figures are seen as swallowed up, devoured, or generally overwhelmed by forces completely beyond their control. Forces are described as overpowering, malevolent, perhaps even psychotic. Frequently, the force is described as existing outside of the relationship between two figures or objects, underscoring the massiveness of the force, its overwhelming nature, and the complete passivity and helplessness of the objects or figures involved (e.g., something being consumed by fire, destruction after a tornado, or God's wrath).

