ADVANCES IN PROJECTIVE DRAWING INTERPRETATION

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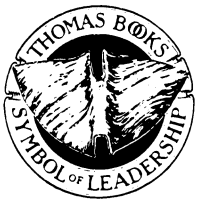

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To
Lila, Diane Robin and Cary Marc
and to
my students and supervisees from whom,
over the years, I have learned as I
taught (several of whom have become
contributors of chapters to this book)

It is ourselves we seek to see on the canvas, as no one ever saw us, before we lost our courage and our love.

William Carlos Williams (1996)

PREFACE

The art and the craft of projective drawing interpretation, over the close to half century since my earlier book, *The Clinical Application of Projective Drawing,* has advanced in reach and in penetratingness, has grown in experience, in scope, breadth, depth, and quality. The aim of the current book is to take us to this outer edge of the technique's acquired virtuosity, versatility, and usefulness. In addressing the tool's timeliness, we tend to sense, too, something of its profound timelessness.*

When the gifted Czech novelist Milan Kundera turned recently to nonfiction and produced his probing work, *Testament Betrayed: An Essay in Nine Parts* (1995), he was particularly struck with Nietzsche's admonition that we not "corrupt the actual way our thoughts come to us."

Working the same vein, for 50 some years, and culminating in her book *Childhood* (1984), the French author, Nathalie Sarrante, continually underscored the essence of capturing experience as it is felt before it passes through the filter of language.

Images meet these requirements, and projective drawings would please Kundera. And Nietzsche. And Ms. Sarrante. (The Rorschach and Thematic Apperception Test, the verbal projective tools, would not please them as much.)

This book might start with, as it is, over its course, fueled by, Chekhov's insistence that "an artist isn't obliged to solve problems, only to state them correct" (V. S. Prichett in *Chekhov: A Spirit Set Free*). Freud, in good measure, felt similarly about the psychoanalyst's obligation. And so, too, we might in addressing the task of projective techniques. If the

*For example, masterly drawn beast and animal-human combinations (ex.: bison standing upright on human legs) discovered recently in a cave in the Ardea, in France, were judged to be over 30,000 years old, making them the world's oldest known paintings, and the birth of art, and at the same time, in the anthropomorphic animal creatures, the birth of projection in drawings.

It was Dashiell Hammett, I recall, who once observed (if I may paraphrase him): There is in man a need to see himself, to have himself expressed. This is the thrust that sent early man to daubing his cave walls with ochered representations of himself in the hunt. No creation can have an older, a deeper, a more authentic basis. This, then, is our art. And its people are us.

portraits are true, solutions naturally generate out of them. (Of course, anything we might—can—actively suggest in the direction of solutions, we are most satisfied to accomplish.)

Congruent with Chekhov's view, deepening it and bringing it closer to projective drawings, the gifted artist Klee wrote that "Art does not reproduce the visible, but makes visible" (Klee, 1961, p. 76).

It is toward these ends that early in my career I went to work with John N. Buck, the father of the House-Tree-Person Technique. Those were exciting times. John Buck and Karen Machover, as so often happens, were simultaneously coming at the same discoveries (the former, the projective possibilities in the drawing of a House, Tree, and Person, and the latter, in the drawing of a Person of each sex) and from different parts of the country, Virginia and New York, respectively. And also, just about then, the Draw-A–Tree came across the waters from Switzerland.

Sprawling offshoots followed. One after another there appeared the Draw-A–Family; the drawing of an Animal which tapped the more biological side of the biosocial coin; the Draw-A–Person-In-The-Rain, which was innovated to assess the self as experienced in conditions of environmental stress; Kinget's Drawing Completion Test; and Harrower's Unpleasant Concept Test ("please draw the most unpleasant thing you can think of") which, after the comparatively more neutral content, suddenly presents the subject with the challenge of addressing a highly intense one.

This was in the 1950s and it was then I wrote *The Clinical Application of Projective Drawings* to draw the sprawling field together into an integration. Since that time my clinical work and my research explorations have kept me at the center of the stream that is projective drawings.* Forty years in clinical science, as Dickens might have put it, is a short time and a long time. Much has evolved and discoveries have been made. One thinks, for example, of the gains made in the use of projective drawings to pick up the presence of organic brain damage (Chapter 2), of the signs for predicting acting-out (suicide, homicide, assault, rape, sexual abuse: Chapter 3), of the experimental work offering sturdy support to the use of chromatic drawings to descend deeper into the hierarchal structure of

*Through the extended trajectory of my work I have wrestled with the task of bringing the research and the clinical data into synchronization–a daunting enterprise. The work reported in Chapter 5, for me, comes closest to satisfying this challenge.

personality (Chapter 5), of the demarking of sex differences in the developmental patterns of children's drawings (Chapter 10).

At this point, we may freshen our sense of the history of the development which flowed from the exciting notion that a subject's art work might serve as entry to the mysteries and secrets of that subject's personality— reviving the adventure earlier attendant on the discovery of the analysis of dreams, and of the Rorschach, for this same purpose. In this fertile and creative experience, the titans were, as indicated above, John N. Buck and Karen Machover. Both the H–T–P and the D–A–P grew out of the earlier use of drawings for the assessment of intelligence. Buck had been using the drawings of a House, Tree, and Person as subtests in the Performance Scale (along with Kohs Blocks, Object Assembly, etc. quite similar to the scales Wechsler was developing). But Wechsler beat Buck to publication. And Machover had been using the Goodenough Draw-A-Man test to appraise children's IQ. Both Buck and Machover, along with we others who were using the Goodenough, noticed that an even richer yield in terms of personality projection, was coming through. And so this rich dividend was harvested by the converting of the use of drawings from an IQ test into a projective technique. By combining Buck's House, Tree, and drawing of one Person with Machover's drawing of two Persons, one of each sex, we gain a richer, both broader and deeper, tool.

In the current work, I have assembled the *essential papers* since my earlier book and have added new material as needed and some rather interesting case illustrations, both contributed and my own. The goal is to bring together within one set of covers the most valuable of the scattered contributions of the latter decades so they are more available for convenience and, all the more, for synthesis. For their kind permission to reproduce some of the material, now here revised and expanded, appreciative thanks are extended to the American Psychological Association ("D–A–P: Back Against the Wall?" and Z. Wanderer, "Validity of Clinical Judgements Based on Human Figure Drawings," both from *Consulting & Clinical Psychology*), Western Psychological Services (Case C by Hammer, and Case S. G. by Buck), *Journal of Clinical Psychology* (J. S. Verinis et al., "The Draw-A-Person in the Rain Technique: Its Relationship to Diagnostic Category and other Personality Indicators"), Plenum Press ("Projective Drawings: Two Areas of Differential Diagnostic Challenge" from B. Wolnan, Ed., *Clinical Diagnosis of Mental Disorders*), *Journal of Personality Assessment* (Hammer, "Critique of Swengen's 'Empirical

Evaluation of Human Figure Drawings' "), Grune & Stratton (Machover, "Sex Differences in the Developmental Patterns of Children as Seen in Human Figure Drawings"; Hammer, "The H–T–P Drawings as a Projective Technique with Children" and Hammer, "Acting-Out and Its Prediction by Projective Drawing Assessment"), *The Arts in Psychotherapy,* Elsevier Science (Gillespie, "Object Relations as Observed in Projective Mother-and-Child Drawings").

Invited contributors were chosen for their pertinence and their range and inventiveness, or for their fecundity, all of which allows a spotlight to be thrown upon the cutting edge of our field as we move into the twenty-first century—and the study of our subjects' emotions, personal needs, and humanity, and simultaneously, the study of the most direct of all of the projective tools for illuminating them.

The collection of chapters in this current work mixes the best, the most richly heuristic of that which has appeared since my previous book in 1958 which integrated and defined the sprawling and scattered field of projective drawings, and the new, written freshly for this book.

The signature pieces are (1) the differentiation of two diagnostic challenges, schizophrenic and organic brain damage from neurotic conditions and from each other (Chapter 2); (2) the prediction of imminent acting-out states of dangerousness to others or to self, of homicide, suicide, rape, sexual abuse, assault, violence, exhibitionism, and so on (Chapter 3); (3) the use of the chromatic drawings to descend deeper into the projective technique process to elicit a more hierarchal personality portrait (and the very affirming experimental follow-up—perhaps the most supportive experiment to emerge in all of those performed in our field) (Chapter 5); and (4) the investigation of the personality dimensions which differentiate those interpreters who possess the talent to effectively practice the art of drawing interpretation from those who do not—and thus illuminate an explanation of the extended years of mixed experimental results, both negative and positive, which plague validity studies (Chapter 18).

As to the new and invited contributed chapters, I find them deeply pleasing. Nearly every one is a small monument to clinical virtuosity. (What is such clinical virtuosity? The linking of pure authenticity and utter clarity.)

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ADVANCES IN PROJECTIVE DRAWING INTERPRETATION

Chapter 1

THE VIEW FROM A STEP BACK

> Images are fast replacing words as our primary language.
>
> Richard Avedon
> *Darkness and Light* (1996)

My experience as I read novels or poetry and attend plays, or as I practice in our field, is of a common tapestry that links both. It has satisfyingly become apparent that it is to our creative cousins, the poets and playwrights and novelists, that we might turn for confirmation of our clinical findings, for insight, and for graceful articulation of our mutually held wisdoms.

The process—its very essence—of projective techniques is keenly brought to life in these words by John Steinbeck:

> A man's writing is himself. A kind man writes kindly. A mean man writes meanly. A sick man writes sickly. And a wise man writes wisely.

Samuel Butler has stated it more broadly:

> Every man's work, whether it be literature or music or pictures or architecture, or anything else, is always a portrait of himself, and the more he tries to conceal himself, the more clearly will his character appear in spite of him.

Overlapping literature and clinical areas, that is, fictional characters and actual people, we are reminded of Henry Murray's memorable and ingenious classification: "Every man is in certain respects (a) like all other men, (b) like some other men, (c) like no other man."

In therapy, to most neurotic patients, pointing out their issues in category *a* is reassuring; it's the *b*s and *c*s that may be threatening. Psychoanalytic work may focus on the patient's defenses, his or her particular nature and operation, which fall in the area of *b* for the most part (it is hard to think of any that are in *c*) which are more apt to appear, if at all, in fiction—say, for instance, Peter Pan or Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde (although even the latter may be seen as a metaphor in the class "like some other men," i.e., multiple personality). As examples, the

defenses of denial or of reaction-formation may respectively be seen in the domain of "like some other men," as are similarly sexual feelings toward one's mother or daughter, or conversely, father or son. In the category of "like all other men" may be placed the natural feelings of ambivalence toward parents.

Whereas novelists, playwrights, and poets deal with all three, a proper projective technique report deals only with *b* and *c.*

When we use projective techniques, we tend to rely upon molecular data from seemingly trivial sources (at least as the patient may view it) from the way the subject draws a house, or tree, or person, or what he may see in ink blots presented to him. As therapists, we tend to base our understanding, however, more upon the client's actions in important, rather than trivial, situations. We regard the personality as revealed in relation to one's mate, one's family members, one's boss or supervisor, one's therapist, and one's friends as a better indicator than the personality revealed while asking for change, speaking to the bus driver, or tying a shoelace. Let us examine some of these molecular, rather than molar, bits of behavior, the seemingly trivial or inconsequential. If a man has just asked his boss for a raise—an assertive sign—having gotten it, he then decides, while out during his lunch hour, to call his wife. He finds that he does not have a quarter for the call and thinks to break a dollar with the proprietor of a newsstand near the phone booth. But he hesitates, feels inhibited about the "imposition" and then searches for something to buy in order to break the dollar. He doesn't particularly want any gum, but elects to buy a pack in order to get the change. Now, which is the more valid data to go by in knowing this man on the assertion dimension?

Well, the answer is actually both, but the point is that the minor action is not to be dismissed as, against the major action (asking for a raise), negligible. Might it be that this is a man who is capable of assertion, when he has to, but at the price of significant *inner tension* and a pushing himself to engage in that which, to him, does not feel natural?

Similarly, let us consider a man who is mild, meek, and deferential in behavior but whose dreams are filled with gore, aggression, and sadistic rage. Are the content of his dreams to be dismissed, for, after all, this is a man who actually is very different than his dreams? Similarly, should the physician whose patient shows no sign of TB dismiss the microscope finding of TB in the man's sputum? There are in psychology latent conditions, as there are in medicine. And again in psychology as in medicine, the challenge is to predict which—and perhaps how imminently— the latent condition may surface and define the overt.

The very heartbeat of this book pulses with the realization that the relatively minor situations, namely, the way in which a person draws, are not to be dismissed as reflectors of personality. In fact, in one's more minor, unguarded casual interactions in life itself, one sometimes is more naturally oneself. Certainly in response to one's supervisor or boss, one's teacher, and one's analyst (at the beginning, at least) one is pouring more energy and defensive maneuvering into making a good impression, rather than being more authentically oneself.

Of course, the reliability, in addition to the validity of data, is to be assessed. In terms of body language, for example, does a person generally sit in a certain characteristic way? Does he or she generally sit on a couch with arms widely outstretched on the back of it, as feet are equally widespread, thus conveying the sense of aggrandizingly taking in all that one can encompass?

Or does one generally, and usually, sit with knees together, elbows in, shoulders a bit hunched, and hands clasped, sending out a picture of nonthreatening, submissive compliance or dutifulness?

Or, are the legs wound around each other with the elbows planted on the crossed legs and the chin nestled into the hands, all in all conveying a narcissistic sense of exquisite self-involvement? And, furthermore, does the subject draw his figure drawing Person in the same posture?

And are the drawings of the first individual, the one with arms and legs splayed widely out, too large, pressing out against the limits, the edges of the page? Is the line quality of the second person, consistent with the dutiful posture, hesitant, faint and timid?

Let us take two hypothetical men through three minor situations together. Working together they decide to have lunch with each other and as they walk along, both their shoelaces, as in such stories such things happen, come undone at the same time. One puts his foot up on the bottom railing of the fence they are walking along in order to tie his shoe, whereas the other brings himself all the way down to the shoe, on the ground, in order to tie it. At lunch they both order soup and one brings the spoon up fully to his mouth, whereas the other ducks his head down toward the spoon to meet it. Stopping off at a library on the way back to work, one picks up a book and tilts it in order to read the title along its spine, whereas the other man instead tilts his head. If the requirements of reliability are met by it being the same man who brings the shoe up to himself, the soup up to his mouth, and accommodates the book rather than his head, and conversely, it is the other man who