

# From Hermann to Hartmann: A Norwegian Rorschach history

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## Introduction

The interest for the Rorschach method (Rorschach, 1921) varies with time, driven by changes when persons central to the field come and go. In Norway, three persons have been especially important in creating interest, shape working environments and publish scientific works that leaves traces. The first is Harald Schjelderup, who introduced the Rorschach method in Norway. The other is Bjørn Killingmo, who, through his teaching at the University of Oslo and his seminal Rorschach book has contributed to strong enthusiasm and to establish a strong Norwegian tradition for psychodynamic and clinical use of the Rorschach method.

The third person is Ellen Hartmann, who has taught the Rorschach method at three Norwegian universities, and who has contributed to and written several empirical papers in the last few years. In connection with her retirement in 2013, I would like to sum up some central events in the Norwegian history of the Rorschach, say something about where the Norwegian Rorschach community is standing today, and where we are heading.

This text is a translated and abbreviated version of the Norwegian original text located at <http://rorschach.no/historie>. It is based on interviews I have done with Bjørn Killingmo (BK, personal communication, April 8, 1997), Sol Seim (SS, personal communication, June 30, 1998), and Ellen Hartmann (EH, personal communication, November 5, 2012), together with a few more limited questions directed to Gudrun Håan (GH, personal communication, February 17, 2013) and Geir Høstmark Nielsen (GHN, personal communication, February 13, 2013).

## The history

### The beginnings in Norway

Harald Schjelderup was the first professor of psychology in Norway (Nilsen & Magnussen, 2009). Schjelderup took a keen interest in psychoanalysis, and on one of his many journeys in Central Europe in the 1920s, he was in Zürich to complete his psychoanalytic training under Oscar Pfister (Skard, 1959). During this time, he learned about the Rorschach method, and he received supervision from one of Hermann Rorschach closest colleagues, Emil Oberholtzer. He “immediately” started teaching the method in Oslo because he “found the method of such importance” (Skard, 1959, p. 127). He mentioned the Rorschach method in his first edition of his introductory psychology book (Schjelderup, 1927), which probably means he started teaching the Rorschach in the mid 1920s. The Rorschach method was therefore introduced quite early in Norway. Based in his interest for both experimental and clinical psychology, he started examining the methods psychometric properties, and to use it on his own patients in his clinical practice (BK). The material from the patients was used in student teaching (SS). Dag Bryn’s Master’s thesis “Human Types” (Bryn, 1932) seems to be the first

Norwegian Rorschach publication, which was later published internationally (Bryn, 1936). Bryn did an experimental comparison of Rorschach's and Jaensch's type theories.

The Master student Sol Seim followed Schjelderup's course in 1935, and started an examination of the link between whole responses and intelligence, which Hermann Rorschach himself had postulated (Rorschach, 1921). She tested 100 thirteen year old children with the Rorschach and intelligence tests (Seim, 1940). The same persons have been followed up since and today form a unique longitudinal material (Seim, 1957, 1968, 1989, 1998). Seim was able to confirm the link she examined, and also found later that intelligence levels rise slightly with age if one manages to keep healthy.

### Clinic and teaching

Bjørn Killingmo graduated as part of the first class of the new professional psychology in 1951, with Shjelderup as his teacher and later also psychoanalyst (Killingmo, 2009). He started working at Vindern psychiatric hospital, where he noticed a "growing notion that a psychologist was something that they should have," but also that "it was quite unclear what psychologists should do" (BK). Psychotherapeutic treatment was not well developed within psychiatry, and Killingmo says he found his role as a clinical psychologist through the use of the Rorschach method. Based on Klopfer and Kelly's (1942) approach, he wrote encompassing personality assessments. He "studied night-time and test day-time," but also experienced that his assessments were not always used that much. He became more concerned with how the Rorschach could be used to formulate relevant therapy questions. He collaborated with Bjørn Christiansen among others in a larger research project at Nic Waal's Institute to clarify this question (Christiansen, Killingmo, & Waal, 1956; Christiansen & Killingmo, 1963). The examined ten different performance-based tests ("projective" tests) and their clinical utility, a project that became seminal for assessment strategies at Nic Waal's for a very long time (BK).

In 1959, Killingmo was given the assignment from Schjelderup to make a test course in the latter part of the professional psychology study. With his experiences from Vindern he developed a curriculum which included a larger test battery, also including the Rorschach method. To the degree that he used scoring, he used Klopfer's, Rapaport's and Schafer's psychodynamic approaches (Klopfer, Ainsworth, Klopfer, & Holt, 1954; Rapaport, 1949; Schafer, 1954), but the scorings were only a departure point for dynamic and ideographical interpretations (BK). His work in this area later culminated in the book "The Rorschach Method and Psychotherapy" (Killingmo, 1980, 1988), which presented a theoretical and experience based approach, tying together ego-psychology and Rorschach evaluations to clarify psychotherapeutic issues. His book has never been translated into English, but Killingmo has regularly been invited to Sweden and Denmark by interested Rorschach scholars (BK).

Killingmo laid a new and crucial foundation in Norway for the use of the Rorschach method with a strong and consistent clinical and psychoanalytical focus. Many generations of psychologists were given at least a glimpse into psychodynamic and psychoanalytic use of the method through his teaching and his book. This was also a period internationally when psychodynamic and psychoanalytic use of the Rorschach was at its height, and the Rorschach was in many ways synonymous with clinical psychology (Groth-Marnat, 1999). In the rest of Scandinavia, more empirical traditions were also present, but not so in Norway. As opposed to Schjelderup, Killingmo showed little interest in traditional empirical and experimental research, and more empirically oriented approaches did not become influential until many years later.

## From clinic to research

Ellen Hartmann was an assistant teacher in Killingmos test course in the end of the 1960's, and she brought this experience with her when she moved to Bergen and started a test course based on the Oslo template together with Geir Høstmark Nielsen. They felt they lacked suitable teaching material and therefore made "Compendium in Rorschach Methodology" (Hartmann & Nielsen, 1976). This was used in universities in Oslo and Bergen way into the 1990's. It was based on the Klopfer system with a major focus on Killingmos theories and interpretative approach. Only two years before, John E. Exner Jr.'s Comprehensive System was published (CS, Exner Jr., 1974), a system that aimed for an integration of former systems and to build a stronger empirical foundation for the Rorschach method. Hartmann and Høstmark Nielsen considered learning and using the CS, but decided it was too complex for introductory courses for students (EH). It was also "much more important what Rapaport, Schafer or Killingmo had thought" than what contributions could be drawn from empirical research (EH). Still, the publication of the CS was still important because she realised the importance of doing research also on the Rorschach method, a thought which until then was rather remote. Still, 20 years would pass before she started her own research on the method.

Back in Oslo, Hartmann took over Killingmos test course in 1979, still with a strong theoretical and clinical focus. A few years after, she supervised her first Master's thesis that used the Rorschach. Gudrun Håan examined fighter pilot selection in the armed forces (Håan, 1988), but chose the CS because she saw that this system was dominant in the international research literature. Håan would later become central to the introduction of CS to Norway. She arranged CS-based Rorschach courses, first privately, then together with Kari Troland as part of specialist training in the Norwegian Psychologists Association. She was one of the founders of the European Rorschach Association in 1989. She was also part of the group who arranged the first and so far only international Rorschach conference in Norway in 1994. Håan and Troland formed their own Rorschach community among clinicians, but were not engaged in research. A normative CS study was done, however, in a Master's thesis from Bergen (Amundsen & Dahle, 1993).

## The Oslo group

During the 1990's, it became clear that the CS had conquered a steady foothold internationally, and that its research foundation gave the CS an advantage over the older systems. At the same time, Hartmann was still worried that the CS was too complex, especially for compulsory introductory courses for professional psychology students (EH). Partly to address this, Dag Krog and I submitted the Master's thesis "RO-95: A Revised Norwegian Rorschach Scoring System" (Grønnerød & Krog, 1995), supervised by Ellen Hartmann. We integrated the Klopfer system and the CS based on empirical support and clinical utility of various scores, and collected a small normative sample to test the system. I taught the RO-95 in the Oslo test course after I took over from Hartmann in 1997, and we revised the system several times based on feedback and experience from the teaching.

At the end of the 1990's Ellen Hartmann received a professor scholarship in Tromsø, and she established a course in Rorschach methodology there, after a short period where Troland taught the CS. The idea of doing research on the Rorschach had matured, and as part of her scholarship she started several research projects on the method. In hindsight she expresses wonderment that it took her so many years before she realized that Rorschach research is viable, and sees this as a heritage from Killingmo's approach which had such a consistent clinical focus (EH).

Over the years, Hartmann built a research environment that has produced a number of international publications, more than 20 Master's theses, and PhD degrees. Many of the publications have been noticed internationally in the debate on the status of the Rorschach method. Hartmann published several articles that found that the effect of different administration instructions is negligible (Hartmann, 2001), that scars can be detected after depressive episodes (Hartmann, Halvorsen, & Wang, 2013; Hartmann, Wang, Berg, & Sæther, 2003; Hartmann & Wang, 2002), that the Rorschach, but not the Big Five, can predict completion of military special forces training (Hartmann & Grønnerød, 2009; Hartmann, Sunde, Kristensen, & Martinussen, 2003), and that the Rorschach can predict psychopathy (Hartmann, Nørbech, & Grønnerød, 2006). Many of the studies established psychometric properties and utility in new and interesting areas, while still keeping the clinical focus. In this way, she has reconnected with the heritage from Schjelderup.

### **Status and the way forward**

In 2003, the Oslo group and Geir Høstmark Nielsen published the scoring system RN-Rorschach in the book "Introduction to Rorschach methodology" (Grønnerød & Hartmann, 2010; Hartmann, Grønnerød, Krog, Vanem, & Høstmark Nielsen, 2003; Hartmann, Grønnerød, Krog, & Vanem, 2004). With the RO-95 as the departure point, the system built on the Norwegian Rorschach tradition, especially from Killingmo (1988), and was formulated as a simplification of the CS with some justified deviations, and with interpretations influenced by psychodynamic interpretations. Given the wide-spread use of the CS, we were aware that making another scoring system would pose challenges, but we felt it was necessary to present a more simple system to first time students, and also to clinicians who were not too invested in learning all the details of scoring and interpretation. We received a lot of positive feedback through the use of RN-Rorschach in teaching, seminars, research and clinic, and felt that we did reach our goal.

After the death of John E. Exner Jr. in 2006, the development of the CS stopped, and as a result the Rorschach Performance Assessment System was published in 2011 (Meyer, Mihura, Viglione, Erard, & Erdberg, 2011). The system appears relatively simple and user friendly, while at the same time being empirically solid. Some of the harsh criticism raised against the Rorschach in recent years has been addressed, and the system focuses more on a selection of variables showing good psychometric properties. A new international norm data collection has been started, based on R-PAS' somewhat modified administration procedure. We are quite satisfied with many of the choices taken to simplify scoring in R-PAS. Since the two systems now appear relatively similar we choose to stop developing the RN-Rorschach and we will focus our efforts on introducing the R-PAS in Norway. A long history of a separate scoring tradition in Norway is therefore coming to its end. Håan and Troland have for various reasons chosen to stop giving their CS courses, and the CS therefore loses a central foothold in Norway. Since 2010 the Oslo group have included many new members, several of them with CS background. In 2011, the Norwegian Rorschach Society was formed within the Oslo group, and the society will work to promote different uses of the Rorschach method in Norway. The Oslo group is now working together to introduce the R-PAS, which we see as the only sustainable and viable system for the future. A new generation of researchers and clinicians is ready to take the heritage from Schjelderup, Killingmo and Hartmann into the future.

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