CYPRESS KNEES AND OBJECT-RELATIONS

Theoretical Basis of a New Three-Dimensional Projective Technic (KCK)

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Projective technics purport to detect and measure those psychological tendencies which have a vital bearing on an individual's relationships with other people. A view of personality dynamics from this frame of reference is essentially related to the function of the ego and its defenses. The ego is, of course, a precipitate of abandoned object-cathexes and contains a record of past object-choices. It is important, therefore, for stimulus objects used in projective technics to have characteristics that symbolize the qualities of the internalized living objects which they represent in projected form. In their unstructured state, they must have those inherent attributes that are readily recognized by the subject's unconscious as familiar and meaningful; yet they must be ambiguous enough to escape conscious detection, lest the function of the censor take over and give super-ego-directed responses.

Early experience with cypress knees as stimulus objects in a projective technic reveals their unique capacity to represent such objects and to stimulate significant object-relationship responses. The cypress knee is an outgrowth from the roots of the cypress tree (Taxodium distichum) that has found its place in our culture as an ornamental object—a modernistic sculpture of extrahuman origin. As a figure of abstract art, the cypress knee gives pleasure to the observer in inspiring myriad interpretations of its ambiguous configuration. Using rubber replicas of six original cypress knees (Fig. 1), a new three-dimensional projective technic, the Kerman Cypress Knee Projective Technic (KCK), has been devised.

Object-relations constructs offer a promising theoretical basis for this new technic. Hertz asserts that the Rorschach method is still without a theoretical basis, that much of the interpretation of its records is subjective and that the manipulation of

*The author has a limited number of rubber cypress knee test sets available, and he will be glad to send a set to any well-qualified psychiatrist or psychologist on request. Such requests should be sent to Dr. Edward F. Kerman at the address given at the end of this article.
Figure 1. The assembled KCK test objects, showing variety of shapes and differences in size. For identification purposes, they are labeled tentatively, left to right, Knee 1 to Knee 6.