

Figure/Ground Form Tach & The Wizard of OZ

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Symposium
Bethesda, MD
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2015 Presentation on Form Tach

- After my 2015 presentation on Form Tach, I wrote a series of notes and questions to myself that I wanted to pursue.
- I have also toyed with the idea of Figure and Ground as a metaphor or even an algorithm for guiding our observations in testing and therapy.
- Lastly, there are issues and questions about hierarchies that continue to surface.

Disembodied Vision

- I think that there is a marked tendency to think of vision as a disembodied "thing."
- Thinking of it in this way is probably encouraged or facilitated by the "tele-" nature of the visual process.
- Hearing has a similar tendency because it is also a "tele-" process.
- We attach taste, touch, kinesthesia, and proprioception more closely to our body and its movement.

A Discussion

- Now intellectually we all understand that the eye(s) are an integral part of the visual process and that they are most definitely a part of the body.
- But there is a tendency, even among fairly sophisticated commentators, to confuse the issue.
- The following brief discussion made the point succinctly for me and might help others.

A Discussion

"M. Parodi. I would be tempted to say that the body is much more essential for sensation than it is for perception.

M. Merleau-Ponty. Can they be distinguished?"
(Primacy of Perception pg. 42)

Figure/Ground

- The genesis for these thoughts was a comment by a colleague about taking the patient history or that initial patient/parent interview.
- The comment was that the doctor should have a diagnosis or at least a differential by the end of that history or interview.

Figure/Ground

- I think that there are problems with this approach and I'm not sure what is the most effective way to express them, but I'll try to come at it from two directions.
- I'm going to go with getting a case history from a parent here and I'll try some example questions that I ask.

Interview Questions

- What can you tell me about your child's early development?
- How does your child get along with other kids his/her own age?

Figure

- The Figure part of the response to these questions is the specific information they provide. So, for the 1st question we might get:
- "It was fine."
- "She was sick a lot."
- "He broke his arm in 1st grade."
- "She rolled over at 4 months and crawled about 8 months, etc."

Figure

- For the 2nd question, we might get:
- "Fine."
- "She makes friends easily."
- "He prefers younger kids."
- "Other kids don't like her."
- "He gets along better with adults."

Ground

- If we see these responses as Figures which are obvious immediately, what is the Ground structure from which they emerge?

Ground

So, back to our 1st question.

- "It was fine."
 - Tells you very little
- "She was sick a lot."
 - Confusing health hx with development?
- "He broke his arm in 1st grade."
 - Is this early development?
- "She rolled over at 4 months and crawled about 8 months, etc."
 - Well, there is a start. Is it connected to the visual process?

Ground

- And for the second question:
- "Fine."
 - Tells you very little.
- "She makes friends easily."
 - Maybe
- "He prefers younger kids."
 - Are they developmentally peers?
- "Other kids don't like her."
 - Insists on her own way?
- "He gets along better with adults."
 - Because they cater to him where peers won't?

The "Disembodied" Figure

- There is a tendency to accept the patient's description as an "accurate" reflection of an "objective" reality.

Ground

- The patient's (or parent's) response to a question needs to be seen as coming from their point of view and its expression is the product/reflection of them.
- This is the Ground from which the Figure of their response emerges.

Premature Closure?

- The problem is that if you accept the response (the Figure) too literally, you are apt to make a premature closure.
- Any closure you feel you need to make at the level of the interview should be very tentative or tenuous.

The Role of the Testing Regimen

- The role of the testing regimen is to provide a structure which serves to expose or clarify the Ground.

Back to the Ground

- The Ground structure includes not only the parents' view of the specific information (the child's development, or interactions with peers), but also the sophistication of their knowledge, experience, and communication.

"Handshaking"

- We need to establish some common forms and terms as a structure for our exchange.
- We need a sense of this sophistication if we are going to try to establish a communication protocol that provides a more effective dialogue.

Form Tach

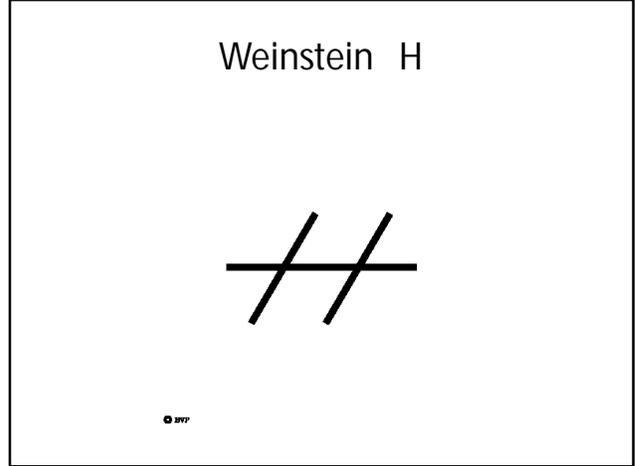
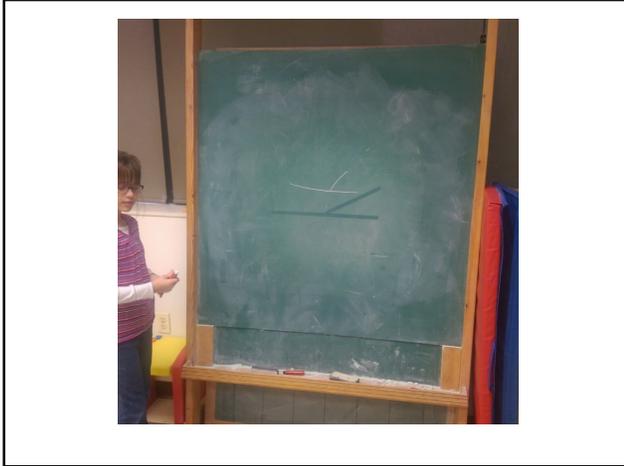
- The Figural aspect of Form Tach is often judged by how faithfully the reproduction matches the model presented.

Form Tach

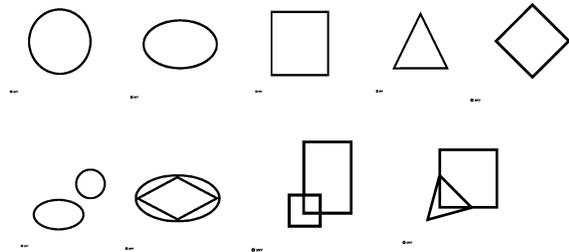
- But there are many elements that can be unrecognized if we center too completely on the Figure.
- Even when recognized, without a conceptual scheme, they are typically under-appreciated.
- STOP

The Body

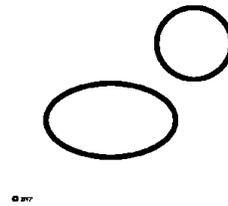




Test Sequence

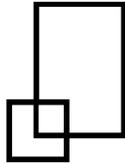


2 Similar, Separate Shapes

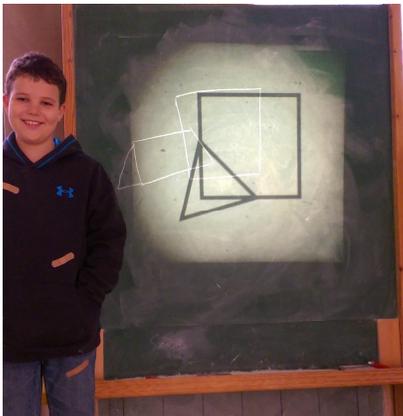
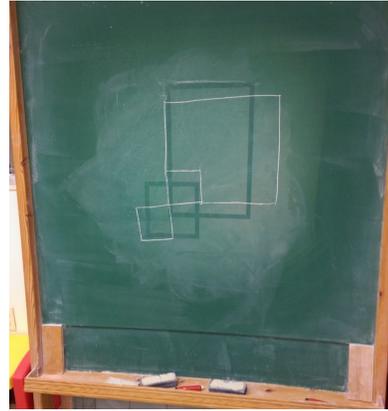


Over-generalization?

2 Similar, Overlapped Shapes

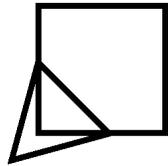


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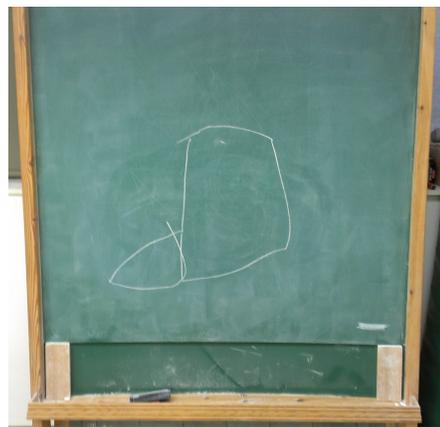
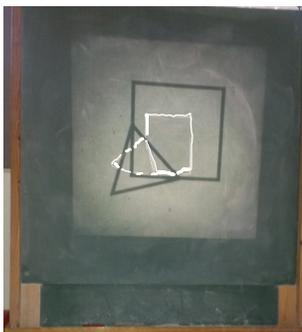
Segmenting?

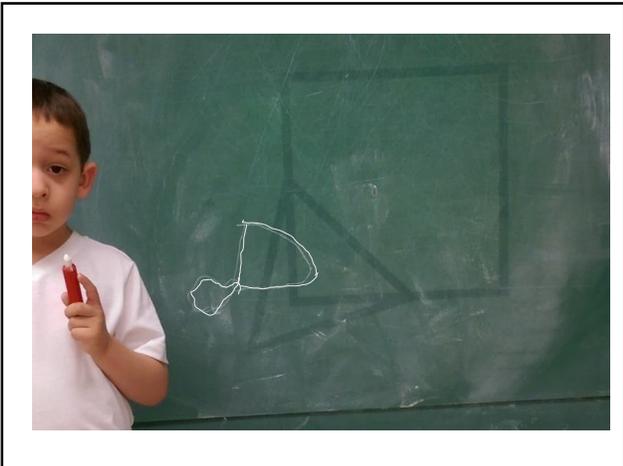
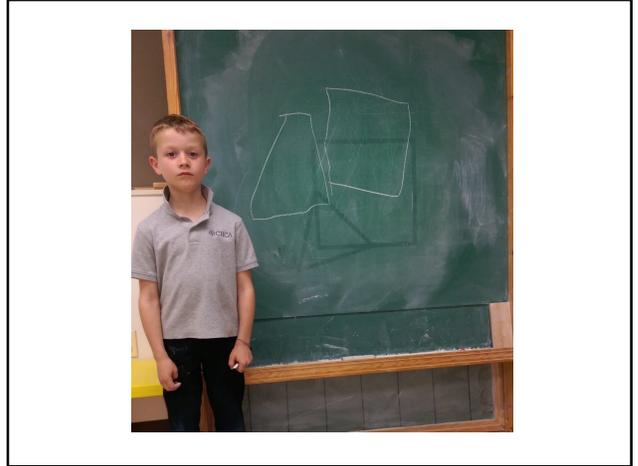
Dissimilar, Overlapped



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Boundary Interface
Issues

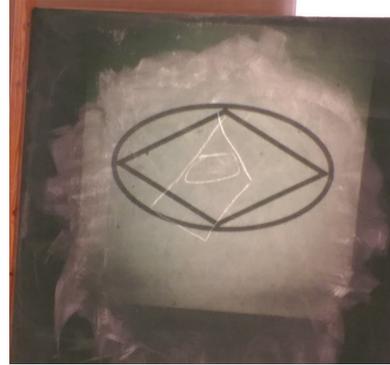




How about this one?



Or this one?



Reversal Problems ?

Hierarchies

- Again, from the Primacy of Perception.
- One of the attendees asks, "Is there a scale of values with respect to the primacy of perception? How are other forms of experience to be situated?"
- By a "scale" the questioner is positing a hierarchy and asking where other forms of experience fit in the hierarchy.

Hierarchies

- Merleau-Ponty responds,
- “Assuredly for me there is a scale. This does not mean for me, however, that what is at the bottom is to be suppressed.”
- He goes on to say, “But the hierarchies of which you are speaking suppose a point of view; from one point of view you get one hierarchy and from another point of view you get another hierarchy. Our research must be concentric rather than hierarchized.”

The Wizard of OZ

- So, why the Wizard of OZ?
- Curtailing our understanding of the patient at the level of the obvious Figure makes it harder, ultimately, to do our job.
- The answers we seek (just like the brain, the heart, and the courage sought by the scarecrow, the tin man, and the lion) come not from the overwhelming Figure, but by pulling back the curtain and making the Ground structure apparent.

Form

- Form may be a Figure, but it is not a static object.
- The Ground from which it emerges is the repertoire of body movements by which actions are completed.
- Separating sensation from perception fractures our understanding of the visual process.

Hierarchies

- This fracturing pushes us to create hierarchies that we feel are necessary rather than appreciating their arbitrary nature.
- These hierarchies are artifacts of our personal organization.
- Understanding my perception depends not just on the recording of my words or images, but must infer the questions that generated the words and images.

THE END

Hierarchies

- Merleau-Ponty
 - Hierarchies – depend on point of view – not linear, but concentric (?)
 - *"Mme. Roire ...Is there a scale of values with respect to the primacy of perception? How are other forms of experience to be situated?"*
 - *M. Merleau-Ponty . Assuredly for me there is a scale. This does not mean for me, however, that what is at the bottom is to be suppressed. It seems to me, for instance, that if we make it our goal to reach the concrete, then in certain respects we must put art above science because it achieves an expression of the concrete man which science does not attempt. But the hierarchies of which you are speaking suppose a point of view; from one point of view you get one hierarchy and from another point of view you get another hierarchy. Our research must be concentric rather than hierarchized."*
 - (Primacy of Perception pg. 36)