



Primary Process Thinking: Theory, Measurement, and Research (Psychological Issues)

Robert R. Holt

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Volume one of this comprehensive approach to one of Freud's most important conceptual achievements, the theory of thinking, examines the emergence and changes in his conceptions of primary and secondary process thought in their theoretical and clinical contexts. Unlike most treatments, which emphasize their embeddedness in metapsychology, the text demonstrates the empirical grounding of these concepts in observation and describes how it led to a method of quantitative measurement. A summary of major, theoretically relevant findings with that method, plus a critical review of post-Freudian reexaminations of primary process, leads to a reformulation of the psychoanalytic theory of thinking that is, in Rubinstein's term, protoneurophysiological: as consistent as possible with contemporary knowledge in the brain sciences. In so doing, the author attempts to convert a psychoanalytic theory into a set of testable propositions using objectively quantifiable, scientific concepts. Moreover, he shows how data obtained with his method can be used to confront the theoretical propositions, verifying some, rejecting some, and significantly modifying others.

Volume two is an enclosed compact disc. The first ten chapters constitute a detailed scoring manual, designed to be self-teaching, for applying the concepts of primary process, its controls and defenses, to data from the Rorschach and Thematic Apperception Tests, dreams, and free verbal data. The remaining chapters treat its reliability and validity, including a critical summary of over one hundred researches from around the world, demonstrating how it can be used not only to test psychoanalytic propositions but to illuminate issues in clinical psychiatry, clinical and developmental psychology, and personality. A concluding chapter points to many promising directions for further research.

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