Chapters 8 through 11 have to do with the Rorschach test, approached in a more focused way than the preceding treatment of the TAT. As I write these words, I realize that it was just about 25 years ago that I began work on what is still an unfinished task, converting Rorschach’s familiar inkblot test into an operational measure of primary process thinking. The story may be pieced together from the chapters themselves, though they do not make explicit the many changes in the scoring method as it grew from a one-page checklist to a mimeographed document of over 200 pages (50 of which, a manual for scoring form-level, are primarily the work of Martin Mayman). Obviously, the main change has been accretion, but I have also had to recombine and reorganize categories as experience taught more intelligible ways of presenting them.

Working on this scoring manual and the research in which it was used has been both a spur to theoretical clarification and a means of achieving it. Most of my work on psychoanalytic theory has been published elsewhere, and the bulk of it is collected in a book which I hope will appear shortly after the present one. In line with my paper on motivation (Holt, 1976a), I have substituted “wish” (or “motive”) for “drive” in a good many places. Because of all these changes, technical and terminological, I have had to make a number of minor editorial revisions in this paper and to delete material concerning categories I no longer use. Nevertheless, these small changes having been made, it still remains a good general introduction to the primary-process scoring method.

Gauging Primary and Secondary Processes in Rorschach Responses

When Rorschach gave us his test—his blots, his way of administering the experiment, as he called it, and interpreting the results—he also left us a system of scoring the responses. Essentially, this was a way of abstracting from a complex performance four or five important dimensions—dimensions which hundreds of Rorschachers since have found most useful. Hermann Rorschach was perfectly open in pointing out the intuitive and heuristic nature of these scoring categories. One of the first points he made in his monograph was that the theoretical basis of the test was almost nonexistent.
Since Rorschach’s death, other hands have worked to expand and perfect the scoring, but mostly this has meant increasing its differentiation and making explicit the criteria for assigning the particular scores. Attempts to work out a theoretical rationale of the test, or to construct new scoring systems on a theoretical basis, have been few indeed. It seems that the majority of workers have followed Rorschach himself in working mainly within the framework of some kind of psychoanalytic theory in their thinking about personality, yet only rarely has this led to attempts to set up new scoring categories.

With the help of a number of assistants and colleagues, I have been trying to develop such a theoretically based system of scoring. Rather than taking existing categories for classifying Rorschach responses and asking (either via theoretical analysis or empirical correlation) what they mean, we have started with the psychoanalytic theory of thinking and have sought to find aspects of the test performance that concretely embody the concepts and phenomena to which the theory directed our attention. In the present preliminary report, my intention is primarily to give an example of a way that Freud’s thinking may be able to make an even greater contribution to the usefulness of the Rorschach method than it already has. The scoring system described here is at present being used in research only, and it does not try to capture all that is important to score in Rorschach responses. Rather than competing with conventional systems (with which it slightly overlaps), it supplements them.

Specifically, it is limited to the problem of finding operational definitions for the psychoanalytic concepts of primary and secondary processes. It is rather remarkable that these are among the least-known and least well understood of Freud’s concepts, considering the basic place they hold in the theory, and the fact that his account of them was first published over 55 years ago, in the *Interpretation of Dreams* (Freud, 1900a). The reason probably is that the seventh chapter of that book, where the concepts are introduced and most fully expounded, is about the toughest going in all of Freud’s output, and before the *Standard Edition* no good translation was available.

Psychoanalysis popularly has the reputation of being a voluntaristic, antirational theory, one that portrays thought as the plaything and creature of man’s impulses. Actually, of course, Freud did not deny that logical, rational, realistic, and efficient mental processes exist, or even that they make

---

1 I am grateful to many persons who have helped in various ways with the work reported here. Marilyn Brachman and Anthony Philip have been able research assistants; Joan Havel’s contribution to the manual is more extensive than anyone else’s and was invaluable. Roy Schafer and I exchanged ideas constantly while he was writing his book on the Rorschach (Schafer, 1954) and I my contribution to another (Klopfer, Ainsworth, Klopfer, & Holt, 1954), and often thereafter; he and his colleague, Justin Weiss, have improved the manual by many valuable criticisms and suggestions. To David Rapaport, I am indebted for many things, perhaps most of all for a point of view from which this work is a natural outgrowth.