



# Five Kohutian Postulates: Psychotherapy Theory from an Empathic Perspective

*Ronald R. Lee, Angie Rountree, Sally McMahon*

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In comparison with the traditional notion of science as generalizable and predictive knowledge, Five Kohutian Postulates presents psychotherapy as a science of the unique. It uses the philosopher Imre Lakatos' emphasis on research programs that organize around a central postulate and auxiliary postulates to explicate Heinz Kohut's 'self-psychology.' Kohut's psychotherapy theory entails four auxiliary postulates that are interlinked to the central postulate of empathic understanding, and to each other. The main chapters illustrate how these postulates function as orienting stars in theoretical space to foster a firm psychotherapeutic identity, and to concurrently foster the inclusion of complementary ideas from other psychotherapy theories. These chapters also reveal how self-psychology exemplifies Lakatos's idea that the most valuable scientific theory is regenerative. The last chapter points to the need for post-modern psychoanalytic psychotherapy to take seriously the idea of a professional commitment to the patient.

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