

# Dream Psychology

Sigmund Freud

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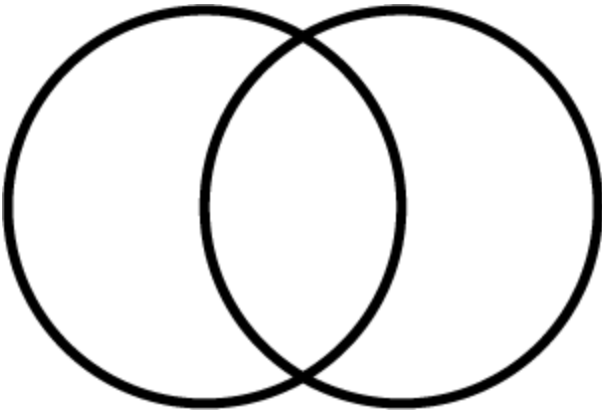
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# **Dream Psychology**

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# INTRODUCTION



The medical profession is justly conservative. Human life should not be considered as the proper material for wild experiments.

Conservatism, however, is too often a welcome excuse for lazy minds, loath to adapt themselves to fast changing conditions.

Remember the scornful reception which first was accorded to Freud's discoveries in the domain of the unconscious. When after years of patient observations, he finally decided to appear before medical bodies to tell them modestly of some facts which always recurred in his dream and his patients' dreams, he was first laughed at and then avoided as a crank.

The words "dream interpretation" were and still are indeed fraught with unpleasant, unscientific associations. They remind one of all sorts of childish, superstitious notions, which make up the thread and woof of dream books, read by none but the ignorant and the primitive.

The wealth of detail, the infinite care never to let anything pass unexplained, with which he presented to the public the result of his investigations, are impressing more and more serious-minded scientists, but the examination of his evidential data demands arduous work and presupposes an

absolutely open mind.

This is why we still encounter men, totally unfamiliar with Freud's writings, men who were not even interested enough in the subject to attempt an interpretation of their dreams or their patients' dreams, deriding Freud's theories and combatting them with the help of statements which he never made.

Some of them, like Professor Boris Sidis, reach at times conclusions which are strangely similar to Freud's, but in their ignorance of psychoanalytic literature, they fail to credit Freud for observations antedating theirs.

Besides those who sneer at dream study, because they have never looked into the subject, there are those who do not dare to face the facts revealed by dream study. Dreams tell us many an unpleasant biological truth about ourselves and only very free minds can thrive on such a diet. Self-deception is a plant which withers fast in the pellucid atmosphere of dream investigation.

The weakling and the neurotic attached to his neurosis are not anxious to turn such a powerful searchlight upon the dark corners of their psychology.

Freud's theories are anything but theoretical.

He was moved by the fact that there always seemed to be a close connection between his patients' dreams and their mental abnormalities, to collect thousands of dreams and to compare them with the case histories in his possession.

He did not start out with a preconceived bias, hoping to find evidence which might support his views. He looked at facts a thousand times "until they began to tell him something."

His attitude toward dream study was, in other words, that of a statistician who does not know, and has no means of foreseeing, what conclusions will be forced on him by the information he is gathering, but who is fully prepared to accept those unavoidable conclusions.

This was indeed a novel way in psychology. Psychologists

had always been wont to build, in what Bleuler calls "autistic ways," that is through methods in no wise supported by evidence, some attractive hypothesis, which sprung from their brain, like Minerva from Jove's brain, fully armed.

After which, they would stretch upon that unyielding frame the hide of a reality which they had previously killed.

It is only to minds suffering from the same distortions, to minds also autistically inclined, that those empty, artificial structures appear acceptable molds for philosophic thinking.

The pragmatic view that "truth is what works" had not been as yet expressed when Freud published his revolutionary views on the psychology of dreams.

Five facts of first magnitude were made obvious to the world by his interpretation of dreams.

First of all, Freud pointed out a constant connection between some part of every dream and some detail of the dreamer's life during the previous waking state. This positively establishes a relation between sleeping states and waking states and disposes of the widely prevalent view that dreams are purely nonsensical phenomena coming from nowhere and leading nowhere.

Secondly, Freud, after studying the dreamer's life and modes of thought, after noting down all his mannerisms and the apparently insignificant details of his conduct which reveal his secret thoughts, came to the conclusion that there was in every dream the attempted or successful gratification of some wish, conscious or unconscious.

Thirdly, he proved that many of our dream visions are symbolical, which causes us to consider them as absurd and unintelligible; the universality of those symbols, however, makes them very transparent to the trained observer.

Fourthly, Freud showed that sexual desires play an enormous part in our unconscious, a part which puritanical

hypocrisy has always tried to minimize, if not to ignore entirely.

Finally, Freud established a direct connection between dreams and insanity, between the symbolic visions of our sleep and the symbolic actions of the mentally deranged. There were, of course, many other observations which Freud made while dissecting the dreams of his patients, but not all of them present as much interest as the foregoing nor were they as revolutionary or likely to wield as much influence on modern psychiatry.

Other explorers have struck the path blazed by Freud and leading into man's unconscious. Jung of Zurich, Adler of Vienna and Kempf of Washington, D.C., have made to the study of the unconscious, contributions which have brought that study into fields which Freud himself never dreamt of invading.

One fact which cannot be too emphatically stated, however, is that but for Freud's wishfulfillment theory of dreams, neither Jung's "energetic theory," nor Adler's theory of "organ inferiority and compensation," nor Kempf's "dynamic mechanism" might have been formulated.

Freud is the father of modern abnormal psychology and he established the psychoanalytical point of view. No one who is not well grounded in Freudian lore can hope to achieve any work of value in the field of psychoanalysis.

On the other hand, let no one repeat the absurd assertion that Freudism is a sort of religion bounded with dogmas and requiring an act of faith. Freudism as such was merely a stage in the development of psychoanalysis, a stage out of which all but a few bigoted camp followers, totally lacking in originality, have evolved. Thousands of stones have been added to the structure erected by the Viennese physician and many more will be added in the course of time.

But the new additions to that structure would collapse like a house of cards but for the original foundations which are as indestructible as Harvey's statement as to the

circulation of the blood.

Regardless of whatever additions or changes have been made to the original structure, the analytic point of view remains unchanged.

That point of view is not only revolutionising all the methods of diagnosis and treatment of mental derangements, but compelling the intelligent, up-to-date physician to revise entirely his attitude to almost every kind of disease.

The insane are no longer absurd and pitiable people, to be herded in asylums till nature either cures them or relieves them, through death, of their misery. The insane who have not been made so by actual injury to their brain or nervous system, are the victims of unconscious forces which cause them to do abnormally things which they might be helped to do normally.

Insight into one's psychology is replacing victoriously sedatives and rest cures.

Physicians dealing with "purely" physical cases have begun to take into serious consideration the "mental" factors which have predisposed a patient to certain ailments.

Freud's views have also made a revision of all ethical and social values unavoidable and have thrown an unexpected flood of light upon literary and artistic accomplishment.

But the Freudian point of view, or more broadly speaking, the psychoanalytic point of view, shall ever remain a puzzle to those who, from laziness or indifference, refuse to survey with the great Viennese the field over which he carefully groped his way. We shall never be convinced until we repeat under his guidance all his laboratory experiments.

We must follow him through the thickets of the unconscious, through the land which had never been charted because academic philosophers, following the line of least effort, had decided *a priori* that it could not be charted.

Ancient geographers, when exhausting their store of



information about distant lands, yielded to an unscientific craving for romance and, without any evidence to support their day dreams, filled the blank spaces left on their maps by unexplored tracts with amusing inserts such as "Here there are lions."

Thanks to Freud's interpretation of dreams the "royal road" into the unconscious is now open to all explorers. They shall not find lions, they shall find man himself, and the record of all his life and of his struggle with reality.

And it is only after seeing man as his unconscious, revealed by his dreams, presents him to us that we shall understand him fully. For as Freud said to Putnam: "We are what we are because we have been what we have been."

Not a few serious-minded students, however, have been discouraged from attempting a study of Freud's dream psychology.

The book in which he originally offered to the world his interpretation of dreams was as circumstantial as a legal record to be pondered over by scientists at their leisure, not to be assimilated in a few hours by the average alert reader. In those days, Freud could not leave out any detail likely to make his extremely novel thesis evidentially acceptable to those willing to sift data.

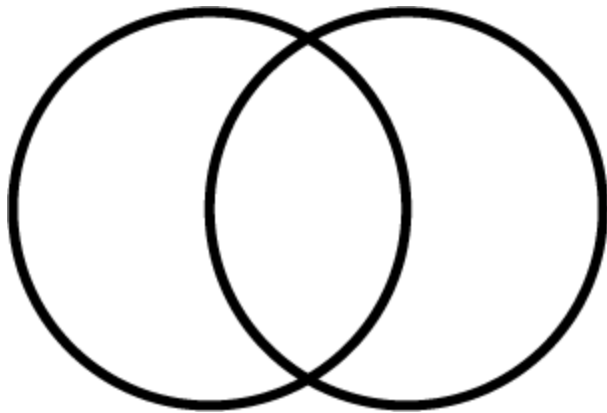
Freud himself, however, realized the magnitude of the task which the reading of his *magnum opus* imposed upon those who have not been prepared for it by long psychological and scientific training and he abstracted from that gigantic work the parts which constitute the essential of his discoveries.

The publishers of the present book deserve credit for presenting to the reading public the gist of Freud's psychology in the master's own words, and in a form which shall neither discourage beginners, nor appear too elementary to those who are more advanced in psychoanalytic study.

Dream psychology is the key to Freud's works and to all

modern psychology. With a simple, compact manual such as *Dream Psychology* there shall be no longer any excuse for ignorance of the most revolutionary psychological system of modern times.

# I DREAMS HAVE A MEANING



In what we may term "prescientific days" people were in no uncertainty about the interpretation of dreams. When they were recalled after awakening they were regarded as either the friendly or hostile manifestation of some higher powers, demoniacal and Divine. With the rise of scientific thought the whole of this expressive mythology was transferred to psychology; to-day there is but a small minority among educated persons who doubt that the dream is the dreamer's own psychical act.

But since the downfall of the mythological hypothesis an interpretation of the dream has been wanting. The conditions of its origin; its relationship to our psychical life when we are awake; its independence of disturbances which, during the state of sleep, seem to compel notice; its many peculiarities repugnant to our waking thought; the incongruence between its images and the feelings they engender; then the dream's evanescence, the way in which, on awakening, our thoughts thrust it aside as something bizarre, and our reminiscences mutilating or rejecting it—all these and many other problems have for many hundred years demanded answers which up till now could never have been satisfactory. Before all there is the question as to the meaning of the dream, a question which is in itself

double-sided. There is, firstly, the psychological significance of the dream, its position with regard to the psychological processes, as to a possible biological function; secondly, has the dream a meaning—can sense be made of each single dream as of other mental syntheses?

Three tendencies can be observed in the estimation of dreams. Many philosophers have given currency to one of these tendencies, one which at the same time preserves something of the dream's former over-valuation. The foundation of dream life is for them a peculiar state of psychological activity, which they even celebrate as elevation to some higher state. Schubert, for instance, claims: "The dream is the liberation of the spirit from the pressure of external nature, a detachment of the soul from the fetters of matter." Not all go so far as this, but many maintain that dreams have their origin in real spiritual excitations, and are the outward manifestations of spiritual powers whose free movements have been hampered during the day ("Dream Phantasies," Scherner, Volkelt). A large number of observers acknowledge that dream life is capable of extraordinary achievements—at any rate, in certain fields ("Memory").

In striking contradiction with this the majority of medical writers hardly admit that the dream is a psychological phenomenon at all. According to them dreams are provoked and initiated exclusively by stimuli proceeding from the senses or the body, which either reach the sleeper from without or are accidental disturbances of his internal organs. The dream has no greater claim to meaning and importance than the sound called forth by the ten fingers of a person quite unacquainted with music running his fingers over the keys of an instrument. The dream is to be regarded, says Binz, "as a physical process always useless, frequently morbid." All the peculiarities of dream life are explicable as the incoherent effort, due to some physiological stimulus, of certain organs, or of the cortical

elements of a brain otherwise asleep.

But slightly affected by scientific opinion and untroubled as to the origin of dreams, the popular view holds firmly to the belief that dreams really have got a meaning, in some way they do foretell the future, whilst the meaning can be unravelled in some way or other from its oft bizarre and enigmatical content. The reading of dreams consists in replacing the events of the dream, so far as remembered, by other events. This is done either scene by scene, *according to some rigid key*, or the dream as a whole is replaced by something else of which it was a *symbol*. Serious-minded persons laugh at these efforts—"Dreams are but sea-foam!"

One day I discovered to my amazement that the popular view grounded in superstition, and not the medical one, comes nearer to the truth about dreams. I arrived at new conclusions about dreams by the use of a new method of psychological investigation, one which had rendered me good service in the investigation of phobias, obsessions, illusions, and the like, and which, under the name "psycho-analysis," had found acceptance by a whole school of investigators. The manifold analogies of dream life with the most diverse conditions of psychical disease in the waking state have been rightly insisted upon by a number of medical observers. It seemed, therefore, *a priori*, hopeful to apply to the interpretation of dreams methods of investigation which had been tested in psychopathological processes. Obsessions and those peculiar sensations of haunting dread remain as strange to normal consciousness as do dreams to our waking consciousness; their origin is as unknown to consciousness as is that of dreams. It was practical ends that impelled us, in these diseases, to fathom their origin and formation. Experience had shown us that a cure and a consequent mastery of the obsessing ideas did result when once those thoughts, the connecting links between the morbid ideas and the rest of the psychical

content, were revealed which were heretofore veiled from consciousness. The procedure I employed for the interpretation of dreams thus arose from psychotherapy. This procedure is readily described, although its practice demands instruction and experience. Suppose the patient is suffering from intense morbid dread. He is requested to direct his attention to the idea in question, without, however, as he has so frequently done, meditating upon it. Every impression about it, without any exception, which occurs to him should be imparted to the doctor. The statement which will be perhaps then made, that he cannot concentrate his attention upon anything at all, is to be countered by assuring him most positively that such a blank state of mind is utterly impossible. As a matter of fact, a great number of impressions will soon occur, with which others will associate themselves. These will be invariably accompanied by the expression of the observer's opinion that they have no meaning or are unimportant. It will be at once noticed that it is this self-criticism which prevented the patient from imparting the ideas, which had indeed already excluded them from consciousness. If the patient can be induced to abandon this self-criticism and to pursue the trains of thought which are yielded by concentrating the attention, most significant matter will be obtained, matter which will be presently seen to be clearly linked to the morbid idea in question. Its connection with other ideas will be manifest, and later on will permit the replacement of the morbid idea by a fresh one, which is perfectly adapted to psychical continuity.

This is not the place to examine thoroughly the hypothesis upon which this experiment rests, or the deductions which follow from its invariable success. It must suffice to state that we obtain matter enough for the resolution of every morbid idea if we especially direct our attention to the *unbidden* associations *which disturb our thoughts*—those which are otherwise put aside by the critic as worthless

refuse. If the procedure is exercised on oneself, the best plan of helping the experiment is to write down at once all one's first indistinct fancies.

I will now point out where this method leads when I apply it to the examination of dreams. Any dream could be made use of in this way. From certain motives I, however, choose a dream of my own, which appears confused and meaningless to my memory, and one which has the advantage of brevity. Probably my dream of last night satisfies the requirements. Its content, fixed immediately after awakening, runs as follows:

*"Company; at table or table d'hôte.... Spinach is served. Mrs. E.L., sitting next to me, gives me her undivided attention, and places her hand familiarly upon my knee. In defence I remove her hand. Then she says: 'But you have always had such beautiful eyes.'.... I then distinctly see something like two eyes as a sketch or as the contour of a spectacle lens...."*

This is the whole dream, or, at all events, all that I can remember. It appears to me not only obscure and meaningless, but more especially odd. Mrs. E.L. is a person with whom I am scarcely on visiting terms, nor to my knowledge have I ever desired any more cordial relationship. I have not seen her for a long time, and do not think there was any mention of her recently. No emotion whatever accompanied the dream process.

Reflecting upon this dream does not make it a bit clearer to my mind. I will now, however, present the ideas, without premeditation and without criticism, which introspection yielded. I soon notice that it is an advantage to break up the dream into its elements, and to search out the ideas which link themselves to each fragment.

*Company; at table or table d'hôte.* The recollection of the slight event with which the evening of yesterday ended is at once called up. I left a small party in the company of a friend, who offered to drive me home in his cab. "I prefer a

taxi," he said; "that gives one such a pleasant occupation; there is always something to look at." When we were in the cab, and the cab-driver turned the disc so that the first sixty hellers were visible, I continued the jest. "We have hardly got in and we already owe sixty hellers. The taxi always reminds me of the table d'hôte. It makes me avaricious and selfish by continuously reminding me of my debt. It seems to me to mount up too quickly, and I am always afraid that I shall be at a disadvantage, just as I cannot resist at table d'hôte the comical fear that I am getting too little, that I must look after myself." In far-fetched connection with this I quote:

"To earth, this weary earth, ye bring us,  
To guilt ye let us heedless go."

Another idea about the table d'hôte. A few weeks ago I was very cross with my dear wife at the dinner-table at a Tyrolese health resort, because she was not sufficiently reserved with some neighbors with whom I wished to have absolutely nothing to do. I begged her to occupy herself rather with me than with the strangers. That is just as if I had *been at a disadvantage at the table d'hôte*. The contrast between the behavior of my wife at the table and that of Mrs. E.L. in the dream now strikes me: "*Addresses herself entirely to me.*"

Further, I now notice that the dream is the reproduction of a little scene which transpired between my wife and myself when I was secretly courting her. The caressing under cover of the tablecloth was an answer to a wooer's passionate letter. In the dream, however, my wife is replaced by the unfamiliar E.L.

Mrs. E.L. is the daughter of a man to whom I *owed money* ! I cannot help noticing that here there is revealed an unsuspected connection between the dream content and my thoughts. If the chain of associations be followed up which proceeds from one element of the dream one is soon led back to another of its elements. The thoughts evoked by



the dream stir up associations which were not noticeable in the dream itself.

Is it not customary, when some one expects others to look after his interests without any advantage to themselves, to ask the innocent question satirically: "Do you think this will be done *for the sake of your beautiful eyes*?" Hence Mrs. E.L.'s speech in the dream. "You have always had such beautiful eyes," means nothing but "people always do everything to you for love of you; you have had *everything for nothing* ." The contrary is, of course, the truth; I have always paid dearly for whatever kindness others have shown me. Still, the fact that *I had a ride for nothing* yesterday when my friend drove me home in his cab must have made an impression upon me.

In any case, the friend whose guests we were yesterday has often made me his debtor. Recently I allowed an opportunity of requiting him to go by. He has had only one present from me, an antique shawl, upon which eyes are painted all round, a so-called Occhiale, as a *charm* against the *Malocchio* . Moreover, he is an *eye specialist* . That same evening I had asked him after a patient whom I had sent to him for *glasses* .

As I remarked, nearly all parts of the dream have been brought into this new connection. I still might ask why in the dream it was *spinach* that was served up. Because spinach called up a little scene which recently occurred at our table. A child, whose *beautiful eyes* are really deserving of praise, refused to eat spinach. As a child I was just the same; for a long time I loathed *spinach* , until in later life my tastes altered, and it became one of my favorite dishes. The mention of this dish brings my own childhood and that of my child's near together. "You should be glad that you have some spinach," his mother had said to the little gourmet. "Some children would be very glad to get spinach." Thus I am reminded of the parents' duties towards their children. Goethe's words—