REMARKS ON DR. MORTON PRINCE'S ARTICLE:
"THE MECHANISM AND INTERPRETATION OF
DREAMS"

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TO members of the Freudian school Dr. Prince's article on dreams must prove a source of especial interest and, in several respects, of considerable gratification. In the first place Dr. Prince is to be felicitated on being of those who do not share Freud's views, the first to make a sincere attempt impartially to appraise them from the outside, and to compare Freud's results with those obtained by other methods. In the second place he has been able by these methods to confirm a part, and by no means the least important part, of Freud's theory of dreams. The fact that he has so far failed to confirm other fundamental parts of this theory would in itself call for no comment from any psycho-analyst, and the only reasons why the following remarks seem to me both desirable and necessary are these: The article purports to set forth an investigation of dreams undertaken by means of Freud's own (psycho-analytic) method, and this, coming from a man of Dr. Prince's authoritative standing in clinical psychology, will naturally tend to create the impression that Freud's conclusions have been adequately and fairly tested, and found wanting. As, however, the evidence that the investigation was largely vitiated by certain deficiencies and misunderstandings, some of which will presently be mentioned, is so apparent to any psycho-analyst, it becomes necessary to protest against such an assumption, the more so as there is every reason to believe that Dr. Prince would be the last to acquiesce in an injustice being done to Professor Freud through a false impression having been unintentionally created.

Shortly put, the conclusions of Dr. Prince's study are as follows: He agrees with Freud (1) that dreams have a psychological history, and that the manifest dream content as related is connected with underlying dream thoughts that can be discovered only through special investigation; (2) that these dream thoughts are egocentric, i.e., are concerned with important and characteristic mental processes of great significance to the subject; (3) that they are often unconscious, i.e., are neither present in the subject's waking consciousness, nor accessible to introspection; (4) that they are not disordered and haphazard, but have an intelligible meaning; (5) that the manifest dream content is a symbolic, usually visual, representation of the underlying dream thoughts. He essentially differs from Freud in not being able to find (6) that the underlying dream thoughts are of an unacceptable nature and have been "repressed"; (7) that they always express the fulfilment of a wish; (8) that there is a resistance due to censoring thoughts which interposes an obstacle to the subject becoming aware of them. "We do find a symbolism which is a perfectly clear and simple representation of previous openly avowed ideas (wishes, fears, etc.), which were not only entertained without restraint, but which dominated the mental life of the dreamer" (p. 173). The question of the relation of the dream thoughts to infantile sexuality is not mentioned, but one is safe in inferring that it would have been answered in the negative.

1. Féré. Note sur un cas de paraplégie hystérique consécutive à un reve. C. R. Soc. de Biol., Nov., 1886. Nr. 41. A contribution to the pathology of dreams, etc., Brain, 1887. Vol. ix, p. 488.

2. See, for instance, De Messières Les rêves chez les hystériques. Thèse de Bordeaux, 1895.

3. Waterman, Dreams as a Cause of Symptoms. *Journal of Abnormal Psychology*, October-November, 1910. Vol. v, p. 196.

4. See A. A. Brill. Dreams and Their Relation to the Neurosis. *New York Med. Journ.*, April 23, 1910.

5. Ernest Jones. Der Nachtmar in der Mythologie und in der Geschichte, 1911.

6. For a definition of this term see Ernest Jones. *Psychol. Bull.*, April, 1910, p. 111.

7. Freud. Traumdeutung. 2^e Aufl., 1909, S 175.

8. Erythrophobia, as distinguished from ereutophobia, the fear of blushing, to which this term is sometimes incorrectly applied.

First, as to the material of the investigation there is something to be said from the point of view of both its quantity and quality. Dr. Prince (p. 157) states that he has studied "about a dozen or more" dreams; even of these only some were studied by means of what Dr. Prince calls psycho-analysis, but which for reasons which presently will be mentioned I must call the method of distraction. Now that it is thoroughly well known to every psycho-analyst that no one succeeds in making more than a most elementary analysis in the first attempts, so that it is not at all surprising that Dr. Prince has not succeeded in confirming all Freud's conclusions in this preliminary investigation. Freud himself studied by means of the psycho-analytic method over a thousand dreams before he wrote a word on the subject, and since then he and others have investigated by this method over fifty times that number, with uniformly consistent results. In view of these facts, Dr. Prince's complaint of the inadequacy of Freud's data (p. 151) comes a little strange. Then, again, the choice of the subject whose dreams were studied was in some important respects unfortunate. From previously reported accounts of her case one gathers that she is an unusually intelligent and well-educated lady, having a great interest in psychology, but that she had suffered from a dissociation of personality due to a severe hysteria which has never been treated by psycho-analysis. Personally I have been able to study only two cases of multiple personality, neither so complete as this, but from this study, from a reading acquaintance with all the published cases of the kind, and from my general knowledge of simpler hysterical cases I feel justified in making the following statement, with which I expect hardly any psychopathologist, and certainly no psycho-analyst, will disagree. Though such cases are highly instructive and are well adapted for certain kinds of observations, they are exceedingly difficult cases fully to unravel the psychogenesis of, and this for the following simple reason: When a complete psycho-analysis of even a single trivial symptom is made it is found that the unconscious determining factors are far more extensive and elaborate than might have been expected, the symptom being a highly condensed symbol for

a large group of underlying mental processes; when the symptom itself is an elaborate one, still more when it amounts to a splitting of the whole personality, the disaggregated processes constitute such a huge section of the mind and form such a colossal mass of material as to make the penetrating, unravelling, and ordering of them a most formidable task. In such cases, further, the resistance to a proper analysis must be almost insuperable, for the patient is asked to surrender not a relatively unimportant part of his sexual life, for so one conceives hysterical symptoms, but the main constituents of this.

We come next to the question of method, a vital one, for Dr. Prince states that "even by a conscientious use of the Freud method of analysis" (p. 177) he was unable to confirm Freud's conclusions. Now I would formally deny that there is in Dr. Prince's article any evidence that he employed psycho-analysis at all, and to any one familiar with this method there is the strongest positive evidence that he did not. In his description of psycho-analysis (pp. 142, 144, etc.), the only procedure he mentions is that the patient was put into a quiet state (distraction), and told to supply free associations from various themes. It is true that this is *one*, and an important one, of the *sources of the material* from which a psycho-analysis is made, but, if it constituted the whole procedure, then, evidently, acquiring the method would be a very simple matter. In fact, however, psycho-analysis is a much more elaborate procedure, and I have space here to mention only two of the other important steps. When free, unforced associations are made the patient inevitably comes sooner or later to an obstacle in the communicating of them, and this is termed a resistance. The external evidences of this obstacle are numerous, but many of them can easily be overlooked before one learns to appreciate their significance; such are a halting, a blocking in the flow of thoughts, signs of emotional disturbance, a pause followed by an inexplicable change of the theme, the latter being due to the patient disobeying instructions and resuming a voluntary guidance of the direction of his thought, and so on. It has further to be noted that the patient is often unaware of any direct unwillingness to communicate

the thought that has been kept back. A most important part of the technique of psycho-analysis consists in learning to divine the nature and source of each particular resistance as it arises, thus enabling the patient to overcome it and to proceed with the analysis. Secondly, an integral part of the method is the art of interpretation, of learning how, when, and what to interpret, and how to know whether a given interpretation is correct or not. A false interpretation is soon objectively proved to be so, while a correct one receives ample confirmation and proof. I need not go further into this matter of psycho-analytic technique, but I think enough has been said to show that of the most integral stages one finds no trace in Dr. Prince's paper. Indeed, although an essential preliminary to the analysis is the gradual and often very difficult overcoming of innumerable resistances, Dr. Prince repeatedly says (pp. 173, 177, etc.) that he never encountered any resistance. This I can only explain as a misunderstanding of terms, for if the underlying thoughts were only accessible in the hypnotic state, that is only another way of saying that there was a difficulty in their reaching consciousness in the waking state, i.e., there was a resistance to their becoming conscious; surely Dr. Prince cannot be taking the term in the narrow sense of a voluntary, conscious opposition? Resistance is one of the most readily experienced of processes; in the dreams related it would be easy to select a dozen words which one could guarantee to evoke an early resistance, provided, of course, that all critical selection and judgment were really suspended.

Once it is realized that no psycho-analysis of the dreams was performed a number of questions answer themselves. Dr. Prince's curious finding (pp. 143, 144, 146, etc.), that many forgotten memories could be recovered by hypnotism, but not by Freud's method, is thus easily explained. It is well known to every one who has used both methods that far deeper memories can be recovered by psycho-analysis than by hypnotism, a fact which was one of the main reasons why Freud long ago abandoned the use of the latter.

Dr. Prince agrees with Freud that in relation to dreams three sets of mental processes can be distinguished: (9)

9. I might say that the associations to these two words filled some twenty pages.

the manifest content, or the dream as directly related; (10) the dream material, or memories, usually recent, which serve in the construction of the dream, and (11) the latent content, or dream thoughts, which reveal the ultimate cause and meaning of the dream. In the progressive stages of the analysis one proceeds in this order, and thus penetrates through deeper and deeper layers of memory until the whole structure of the memory is laid bare. It is easy, however, to halt at any step in the analysis, to call the material already collected the latent content, and to designate the varying characteristics of this material (fear, wish, etc.) as the essential attitudes in the formation of the dream. Ferrero has happily termed this procedure an *arret mental* and writes in reference to it:* "C'est une loi psychique que, dans la série des phénomènes à laquelle un autre phénomène est lié par une loi de causalité, la pensée humaine s'arrête aux phénomènes qui produisent des sensations et qui se révèlent directement à nos sens, négligeant ceux dont la présence ne peut être calculée que par la réflexion et la comparaison. C'est un vrai défaut de l'intelligence humaine, un défaut organique, auquel la logique idéale tâche de remédier, en étudiant différentes méthodes de correction." It was the tireless energy of Freud that enabled him to overcome this natural human impediment, and to pursue his penetrating investigations through the shifting early stages of his analyses until he reached a solid vantage ground. Now

10. It is not necessary here to discuss the question of somatic excitations during sleep, for since Freud's work it is not probable that any one will maintain that these are ever the whole cause of any dream.

11. A recent communication by Kreist to the Société de Psychologie (*Journ. de psychol. norm. et path.*, 1910, p. 252) contains a singular illustration of the prevailing tendency to be satisfied with the first steps of a psychological analysis. A certain married couple were continually in dispute, and a divorce was talked of. The husband, as is usual, under such circumstances, recognized in himself an alternation of antipathy and tenderness. There was no apparent cause for the disharmony. Kreist hypnotized the husband, and found that his antipathy to his wife dated from a given dream, which had been previously forgotten. According to Kreist the whole trouble was due to this dream (!), and peace was restored as soon as the husband learned the trivial cause of it. It would be interesting to know the later history of this touching episode.

* Ferrero. Les lois psychologiques du symbolisme. 1895, p. 100.

the material that Dr. Prince offers as the result of his studies, and which he terms the latent content of the dreams, is of a kind that every psycho-analyst will recognize as belonging to the first stages of any investigation into the sources of dreams, but which is quite unlike the latent content as revealed by psycho-analysis. It is therefore entirely comprehensible that it does not show the characteristics (repression, conflict, etc.) which Freud finds in the true latent content. I can only assure Dr. Prince that the dreams as related, and still more the associations he records in connection with them, give a psycho-analyst every hint that more significant mental processes would have been reached had the investigation been carried deeper, and the full expectation that they would display the same characteristics that one finds in all other dreams.

Incidentally, it is desirable to rectify a few other misapprehensions which otherwise would serve to obstruct the path to that scientific accord that we all hope will ultimately obtain in regard to these problems. Dr. Prince agrees that the dreams, at all events in part, were allegorical representations of thoughts which could only be discovered in hypnosis, and not in the waking state, but goes on to assert that he found no indication of "disguise" in the dreams. Well, all that one means by disguised thoughts is the allegorical representation in consciousness of thoughts not accessible to introspection, in other words just what Dr. Prince records. He further states (p. 186) that "it is preposterous logic to assume that the hallucinatory words, 'Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?' were a disguisement of the true thought. . . . Yet this interpretation would be required by this hypothetical mechanism of Freud." I gravely doubt whether any one is in possession of sufficient evidence to dogmatize about the significance of St. Paul's alleged experiences, but with the delusions of patients who ascribe to imaginary external figures thoughts that arose in their own mind it is hard to avoid the conclusion that the true state of their own mental processes is disguised from their consciousness, and sometimes very seriously so. We must all agree with Dr. Prince in his demand that the study of dreams should not be divorced from other, and especially

from psychopathological processes. It was one of Freud's triumphs to have evolved from the facts generalizations that are equally applicable to the most diverse regions of mental functioning.* A typical example is the parallel he has drawn between dream "regression" and hallucinations, in a theory of the latter that resumes the facts more completely than any other that has yet been produced, and the basis of which has been amply confirmed by Jung and others in hysteria and in different forms of insanity. Another instance is Freud's theory of amnesia, which applies as well to the massive disaggregation sometimes seen in hysteria as to the amnesia for dreams or for so many of everyday life experiences. When Dr. Prince says (p. 178) "Nor can I accept the view that the amnesia following the dream differs in principle from that so commonly observed for dissociated states in general," all I can say is that he is not asked to. His misapprehension here probably arises from the non-realization that frequently the repression of dissociated mental processes is not due to the inherently unacceptable nature of these, but is secondary to their becoming associated with deeper unconscious processes of an unacceptable kind. When he further states (p. 187) that Freud's mechanism of secondary elaboration "was easily to be recognized" in the dreams I would remind him that this secondary elaboration is the "disguise produced by the censor," the existence of which he elsewhere energetically denies. In drawing analogies between different phenomena, however, one has to be careful to see that they are truly comparable. In discussing, for instance, the significance of symbolism in general, a highly interesting and important topic, Dr. Prince gives several examples (pp. 181, 183) which, strictly speaking, are not of symbolisms at all. A symbol, or sign, is an indicator for some group of mental processes, and is therefore necessarily an *abbreviation*. It is hardly correct to designate as symbolism, in

* See, for instance, the analogies drawn by Brill between dreams and psychoneurotic symptoms. "Dreams and Their Relation to the Neuroses." New York Med. Journal, April 23, 1910.

the way that is sometimes done, the mere substitutes of one set of sensorial impressions for another (p. 181). How one mental process may have a double meaning, and thus be a true symbol, Dr. Prince excellently illustrates (p. 157). This is the reason why the manifest content of dreams represents, as he points out (p. 153), a much larger group of associated underlying mental processes. Lastly, Dr. Prince's statement (p. 188), that in none of the dreams can he find the mechanism of displacement, must certainly be due to a misapprehension of the sense in which psycho-analysts use this term (*Verschiebung*), for in all the dreams he relates it is visible to the naked eye. Displacement, which is one of the very commonest of mental mechanisms, denotes the investment of an idea with a given affect that originally belonged to another idea. In Dream 2, the investment of the idea of a rocky path with the feelings of difficulty and hardship which the patient had previously experienced in regard to the idea of life, and in Dream 1, the multiple shifting of the temptations of life from one person to another, are excellent illustrations of displacement.

In conclusion, I can only say that Dr. Prince's paper, interesting and welcome as it is, in no way invalidates my previous statement* that up to the present no one who has taken the trouble to acquire the psycho-analytic method has failed to confirm Freud's theory in all essential particulars.

*See some remarks on this point: "Freud's Theory of Dreams." *Amer. Jour. of Psychol.*, April, 1910, p. 284.