METHODS OF DREAM-ANALYSIS¹.

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THE conditions under which dreams are recorded and analysed have a great influence upon the results obtained in the analysis. Thus, the doctrines concerning dreams held by Freud, Jung and psycho-analysts generally are greatly affected by the fact that most of the dreams they analyse and make the basis of their theoretical views are obtained in the course of psycho-analysis, i.e. in the course of a long-continued process of a complex and peculiar kind in which there is a special relation, again of a peculiar kind, between the person whose dreams are being analysed and the person who is performing the analysis. Freud has even shown reason to believe² that some of the dreams of his patients have been the outcome of a wish on their part that the views on which their treatment is being based should be shown to be wrong. If factors, such as resistance to the views of the analyst, which enter into the process of psycho-analysis can have an effect of this crude kind, we can be confident that influences of a far more subtle kind, influences less easily detected, must be continually in action, and that, on the whole, the influence of psycho-analysis will be to produce dreams which will tend to confirm the views of those conducting the analysis. We can have little doubt, for instance, that an analyser who believes, or who is generally supposed to believe, that all psycho-neuroses, if not all dreams, are due to disturbance of the sexual instinct will through this belief, or supposed belief, influence the dreams of his patients and, if he is known to hold this belief, he will produce this effect even if he is careful not to refer to sex in any way in the course of his analysis. It is therefore by no means strange that such a physician as Stekel, who believes that the context of nearly all dreams is sexual³ and evidently discusses this belief with his patients, should find sexual motives so prominent in their dreams. We can also be confident that one who is believed by his patients, or his prospective patients, to hold this belief will have a similar effect even if he says or does nothing wittingly during the analysis to confirm the belief. At the same time the converse must be true. There is the similar danger that

¹ Read at a General Meeting of the British Psychological Society, July 23, 1921.

² *Die Traumdeutung*, 5te Auf., Leipzig and Wien, 1919, p. 106 (Brill's translation, p. 127).

³ *Die Sprache des Traumes*, Wiesbaden, 1911, S. 13.

analyses of dreams which take place under the dominant influence of one who disbelieves, or is supposed to disbelieve, in the influence of sex will tend to give results in accordance with this attitude, or supposed attitude, of the analyser.

Again, if wishes concerning the truth or falsity of a theory can have the effect on the dreams of patients which Freud supposes, how far reaching must be the effects which such wishes must have upon the dreams of one who has formulated a theory or has adopted with fervour the theory of another. The self-analysis of dreams must be exposed in equal or even greater measure to the possibility of influences tending to produce dreams which support, or can be utilised in support of, the theory which is dominating the dreamer.

Equally important must be the conditions under which dreams are analysed after they have occurred. It must make a great difference whether the dream is analysed at once or after an interval of hours or days; whether the analysis is carried out by the dreamer himself or by another; whether the incidents of the dream are remembered and recorded before the analysis begins or whether they are only brought to light in the course of the analysis; whether the associations with the dream are left wholly open, whether they start from different selected elements of the manifest content, and whether they are assisted by some special process of word-association. Lastly, and perhaps most important of all, it must make a great difference in the case of analysis by other than the dreamer to how great an extent the analyser intervenes in the process of analysis and tends, perhaps even unwittingly, to direct the course of the thoughts to which the analysis leads.

If dream-analysis is exposed to all these sources of error, and we may take it as certain that their influence cannot be excluded, it becomes of the utmost importance that one who utilises dreams in the study of psychological problems should make it his business to record as fully as possible the conditions under which the dreams he studies have been experienced, recorded and analysed. It becomes equally important that those engaged in the study of dreams should consider fully different methods of record and analysis and should seek to discover procedures which will at least reduce to as small proportions as possible the various sources of error to which dream-analysis is open.

As I am at present engaged in such an attempt to utilise an extensive record both of my own dreams and of the dreams of others, I propose to employ this opportunity in giving an account of my own procedure together with a criticism of the procedure now in vogue among psycho-analysts

as a means of producing criticism of my own procedure and counter-criticism of my remarks on the procedure of others.

In describing my own procedure it is necessary to begin with a feature of my own general psychological experience which has an important bearing on my method of analysing dreams.

For many years I have been the habitual subject of an experience in which, as soon as I become aware that I am awake, I find that I am thinking, and have for some time been thinking, over some problem, usually in connection with the scientific work upon which I am at the time engaged. Many of the scientific ideas which I value most, as well as the language in which they are expressed, have come to me in this half-sleeping, half-waking state directly continuous with definite sleep. When I began to analyse my dreams I frequently had a similar experience in which as soon as I was awake I found that I was already having, and had for some time been having, thoughts about a dream, the dream itself being still clearly in my mind. In some cases it was difficult to say where the dream ended and the unwitting analysis had begun, but a distinction was usually possible owing to my lack of imagery when awake¹. I could be confident that so long as the experience was accompanied by definite imagery it was that of a dream or of a dream-like state, while the period when imagery was absent was one in which I was no longer dreaming, though I had not yet realised that I was awake.

This peculiarity of my experience of the process of awaking introduces a special feature into the records and analyses of my own dreams. There can be little question that the ideal condition for an irreproachable analysis of a dream is one in which the dream is fully recorded before the analysis begins. In this case all danger is avoided that elements derived from, or suggested by, the analysis may be incorporated into the tissue of the dream. In many cases in which I awoke from a dream more or less suddenly I was able to fulfil this ideal condition, but in the frequent cases in which the dream passed insensibly into the half-waking, half-sleeping and unwitting process of analysis, the danger to which I have referred cannot be excluded. The comparison of dreams so analysed, or partially so analysed, with those where the act of awaking was sudden shows, however, that there is little or no difference between them, and I am inclined to regard my unwitting or partially unwitting method of analysis as one especially likely to lead one to the real thoughts and emotions forming the latent content of the dream.

In other cases, after having fully awaked and recorded the dream, I

¹ See *Instinct and the Unconscious*, Cambridge, 1920, p. 11.

would fall into the half-waking, half-sleeping state, and not infrequently it was in this state that the thoughts came which furnished the explanation of the dream. In more than one case this later period of sleepiness passed into one which must be regarded as sleep, for the clue to the nature of the dream came as a definite image. In these cases we may regard the interpretation of a dream as having been furnished by a second dream even though, as matter of fact, this second dream may have consisted only of a single image.

Where the solution of the dream failed to come in this more or less spontaneous way, I adopted the more usual procedure of turning my attention to different elements of the manifest content, allowing any associations so aroused to pass through my mind. I also searched the experience of the day or two before the dream which could have taken part in determining the nature of the manifest content and in some cases found that the experience which had determined the manifest content was of distinct service in the process of finding the deeper meaning of the dream. When I had reached what seemed to me to be the interpretation of the dream I wrote out the analysis as fully as possible and except in a few cases, the exceptions being definitely noted in my records, the complete analysis of the dream had been made and recorded before breakfast on the morning immediately following the dream.

When features of the dream come to mind during the process of analysis I am accustomed to indicate their late coming to mind by enclosing them in brackets, and similarly when elements are added to the analysis after it has been first written out, this is indicated in a similar manner.

So far as I am aware, we have few records of the methods adopted when dreams have been analysed by the dreamers themselves, but so far as can be judged from chance remarks, the method appears in general to be similar to that by which it is customary, and usually necessary, to analyse the dreams of others. At some period of the day following the dream, the dreamer takes different elements of the manifest content and allows his thoughts to rove freely from these starting-points and notes the images and ideas which come into his mind. In other words he imitates as closely as possible the method of free association which it is customary to employ when analysing the dreams of others. We are not told whether the dream is written out before the analysis begins and any further additions clearly distinguished from those already recorded, though it is occasionally mentioned that a feature of the dream only came to mind during the process of analysis. This point is of great importance

in relation to the category of secondary elaboration of which so much use is made by Freud in his theoretical discussions of the dream.

I can now pass to the methods which I have adopted in analysing the dreams of others. I have rarely adopted the usual psycho-analytic procedure in which the patient is made to lie down in the presence of the analyser and started by him upon the process of free association, for I believe that in the majority of persons a state of a hypnoidal kind is thus set up which greatly assists the occurrence of a process of morbid transference. In some cases where I was already well acquainted with the special desires and anxieties of the dreamer the main lines of analysis were already clear as soon as the dream had been related. In such cases I endeavoured by means of guarded inquiries, carefully avoiding leading questions, to ascertain whether this interpretation was justified, and frequently these conversations led me to discover new wishes and anxieties or modifications of those with which I was already acquainted.

In other cases in which the dreamer has adopted a procedure on waking, similar to that followed by myself, I have obtained valuable clues to the meaning of a dream. My method in these cases has been to instruct the patient as far as possible in my own procedure and to make the analysis a matter in which the patient and I are partners.

Before proceeding further I may say that in the majority of cases this process of analysis has led me to wishes, anxieties and conflicts arising out of recent experience which have served to explain, not only the general features of the dream, but also its details. I am ready to acknowledge that a deeper and longer analysis would in many cases have led to earlier and deeper experience, while there can, in my opinion, be no doubt that when the experience of early years has been brought to the surface, or is in course of being brought to the surface during an analysis, desires and conflicts arising out of this experience contribute to the full interpretation of the dream. It seems to me, however, necessary that we should distinguish carefully between certain differences in the subject-matter of dreams which are often confused.

In dealing with this subject I will begin by considering how far the material reached by the customary process of free association can legitimately be held to have taken a necessary part in the causation of the dream. The assumption which underlies the whole construction of Freudian dream-analysis is that the process of free association, starting from an element of the manifest content of a dream, will lead to the discovery of experience which enters into the chain of causation by which the dream has been produced.

I am quite ready to acknowledge that this process leads the analyst

to experience which enables him to understand the state, morbid or otherwise, of the person who is being analysed, and since in many cases this state may have taken part in determining the nature of the dream, the process will, in these cases, give valuable indications of the conditions by which the dream has been produced. It is, however, a purely arbitrary assumption to suppose that every element of experience to which one is led by the process of free association has had a share in the production of the dream except in the very broad sense that behaviour at any moment, waking or sleeping, is determined by the sum-total of the experience of the behavior. Every feature of experience to which one is led by the process of free association may have contributed to the causation of the dream, but it is a pure assumption, and one which needs far firmer foundations than have been provided by the psycho-analysts, that the experience to which free association leads has the importance universally attached to it by the psycho-analytic school.

Except for the practical reason already mentioned, I have no fault to find with the process of free association as an instrument of diagnosis and treatment, or as a means of contributing to the better understanding of the mind or behaviour of the person whose dreams are being analysed, but I need far more evidence than we possess at present to satisfy me that the process of free association starting from an incident of a dream necessarily leads one to experience which has taken any direct part in the causation of the dream, and these doubts become all the stronger, the greater the interval between the dream and the analysis.

I am ready to acknowledge that the special conditions under which dreams are utilised by psycho-analysts should lead to some degree, and perhaps to a considerable degree, of relation between the elements of a dream and experience to which one is led by the process of free association starting from those elements. When the practice of psycho-analysis is in progress from day to day, it is only natural that elements which enter into the causation of dreams should also enter into the chains of association which emerge when an element of a dream is taken as a starting-point. I wish to make clear that I am not objecting to the use of associations starting from an incident of a dream as a process of diagnostic value, while I concede that the special conditions under which dreams are usually analysed by psycho-analysts will probably lead to the presence of a relation, if not a directly causal relation, between an incident of a dream and experience to which the dreamer, starting from that incident, is led by free association¹. My point is one of scientific

¹ In this case the time-interval between dream and analysis will be of no great importance.

rather than of practical method. I am objecting to the view that experience reached by free association starting from an incident of a dream has any necessary connection with the dream, and I believe that the chance of any such connection is especially slight where only a single dream is analysed, or where the interpretation of a dream does not form part of a long-continued process of psycho-analysis.

The criticism which I am now making of the customary psycho-analytic method of dream-analysis has been foreseen and answered by Freud¹, but the answer seems to me far from satisfactory. It reveals a failure to appreciate the difference between the value of free association as a method of psycho-analysis, i.e. as a method of practical diagnosis, and its value as an instrument in the scientific study of the dream. Freud answers the objection I am now making by referring to the congruity of the results reached by the method and their agreement with the results of the treatment of hysterical symptoms, in which case he regards the disappearance of these symptoms as evidence for the correctness of the procedure. Freud then launches out into a defence of his method against a charge, very different from mine, that the chain of association is arbitrary and not strictly determined, and he repels the concept of a chain of thought without a definite end. He assumes that in the process of dream-analysis, this end is necessarily that which has determined the nature and course of the dream.

I have already mentioned one factor which is present whenever the dream of one person is analysed by another. In this case a person takes a part in determining the chain of associations who was not necessarily influential in determining the course of the dream. In this case I am very far from denying that the process of free association is strictly determined. I am only being more thorough in my belief in determinism in that I am including the activity of the analyser, whether witting or unwitting, in the process of determination.

Even when the dream is analysed by the dreamer himself, in which case this extraneous element in the process of determination has been excluded, it is wholly unjustifiable to conclude that thoughts reached by the process of free association have necessarily taken a part in determining the dream. It is necessary here to distinguish between two cases, that in which the associations are formed in the fully waking state and that in which they occur in the half-waking or hypnoidal state. In the

¹ *Die Traumdeutung*, 5te Auflage, Leipzig and Wien, 1919, p. 393 (Brill's translation, p. 418); also *Vorlesungen zur Einführung in die Psychoanalyse*, Leipzig u. Wien, 1916, p. 108.

former case it is evident that factors will be present during the process of association which were not present in the determination of the dream, and these additional factors will probably be the more numerous and more influential, the greater the interval between the occurrence of the dream and the time of its analysis. If, on the other hand, self-analysis takes place in the half-waking or hypnoidal state, it becomes far more probable that there will be a relation between the thoughts reached by the process of association and those which have determined the dream, but even here we cannot be absolutely confident that the associations will retrace exactly the path which they had previously followed when, according to hypothesis, they were determining the dream. If a period of wakefulness and witting reflection has been allowed to intervene between the dream and the process of analysis, no believer in strict determinism can arbitrarily reject this period as having played no part in the process by which the later associations have been determined, and the chance that this period has had an effect is the greater, the less free the process of analysis is left and the more the self-analyser adopts the artificial method of directing his thoughts to different elements of the manifest dream. The objection I bring against Freud's method of dream-analysis by free association is that it neglects factors which must be acknowledged to play a part if the doctrine of determinism is to hold good. The thoughts associated with a dream are the more likely to lead back to those by which the dream was determined, the more influences of other kinds can be excluded and the less the degree in which witting processes are allowed to intervene. It is for that reason that I believe the orthodox psycho-analytic method to be unsatisfactory and the method by which I have analysed my own dreams to be that best fitted to bring out the nature of the latent content. I have already mentioned that this method may fail to reach a solution and that in such case success may nevertheless be attained by the use of the method of free association starting from incidents of the dream. Moreover, analysis by another person may succeed where self-analysis has failed. I do not regard my own method as infallible or of universal application, but as one which is free from certain sources of error which must accompany the application of the orthodox psycho-analytic procedure. The assumption upon which my method depends is that the latent thoughts which have determined the nature of a dream during sleep continue to be active on awaking, especially when this waking is only partial, and that the period between sleeping and waking provides the fittest opportunity for the discovery of these thoughts.