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DREAMS AND THEIR INTERPRETATION AS DIAGNOSTIC AND THERAPEUTIC AIDS IN PSYCHOPATHOLOGY *

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THE value of dreams as diagnostic aids has been recognized in a vague manner for some time past. It was known, for instance, that the delirium of alcoholics is often preceded by particularly vivid dreams, with predominance of the fear element and corresponding coloring of the dream pictures, also that certain physical conditions, heart diseases, for instance, gave rise to definite kinds of dreams. In the investigation of neurasthenic states the study of dreams of these patients has been of distinct value. No one, however, has so exhaustively treated the subject of dreams from the point of view of interpretation as has Freud,† and in particular none has so strongly insisted on the close affinity to and the importance for the understanding of psychopathic states, especially of the mental state of hysterics.

He was the first to demonstrate that the lack of sense, of logical connection, which strikes us in dreams, is only apparent; that we have to distinguish between manifest and latent contents of a dream and that the latter, represented by the so-called dream thoughts, are far from being nonsensical, but give us important clues to the nature and workings of our subconscious processes of thought. The absurdities in

*Read (by title) before the Amer. Neurol. Assoc., May 29, 1909.

†Sigm. Freud: *Die Traumdeutung*, 2d edition, 386 pages. Leipzig & Wien, Franz Deuticke, 1900.

dreams, where such appear, are shown by Freud to be intentional, meaning to convey sarcasm about the subject represented in the absurd manner. Incongruities of emotions are demonstrated as being due to "substitutions," or "displacements," the emotion attaching itself to a different object than the one really meant. What in dream is represented as "mourning," a black veil, for instance, may thus in dream-thoughts signify "joy," i.e., the wedding veil, owing to a substitution or identification which the dream process has brought about. Or if in a dream a scene of mourning gives rise to joy instead of sorrow, the reason may be that the joy is meant for something different from the subject represented by the dream alone.

Very striking is the similarity between dreams and the somnambulistic and trance states of hysterics, observed in hysterical crises. This is already indicated by the fact that hysterics often cannot distinguish between a hysterical crisis and a dream of their own, being often at a loss to say whether what they relate or experienced was a crisis or a dream, and it may sometimes be very difficult even for the psychologically trained to decide this point from the report of the patient, even when amplified by the observations of an eye witness. A hysterical patient, for instance, whom Dr. E. G. Zabriskie referred to me for study, has attacks which are ushered in by a numb sensation and pain in the right arm, and in which she performs a beating motion with that arm. After that she falls into a state characterized by the occurrence of dream-like scenes which she usually forgets again.

In at least one instance, however, she was able to partially, if not entirely, recollect such a scene, which was the following:

She imagined that she saw herself sitting on the stoop of the house in which she lived, with something in her lap. It appeared to her to be some candy which (in the dream) she had just bought in a store across the street, and which she had in a paper bag. A man with a dog came along, and the dog wanted to have the candy and snapped for it. The man was annoying her in some way or other, and she remembered distinctly hearing herself calling to her mother, "Get the

man with the dog away." She then distinctly saw the picture of the man as he walked away with the dog.

This scene had the vividness of a dream and analysis brought out some interesting facts, showing the intimate relation of some parts of it to events of her life. It demonstrated at the same time how similar the building up of that scene was to that of the building up of dreams.

The dog, on inquiry, proved to be like one of those big, hairy "Eskimo dogs," used for sleigh-riding in the North, and she had frequently seen a dog of that description in her neighborhood. The face of the man was that of a stranger, but she seemed very familiar with him. He reminded her somewhat, in appearance, of the man who delivered ice to her parents. This man was in the habit of teasing her, being sometimes so forward as to make her angry. The man figuring in the attack, too, was teasing her just as the ice-man does.

We have here a composite picture, made out of originally unrelated parts and events:

The stoop on which patient sat in the dream, the candy bought at the store opposite, represent one component. The dog which is identified with the one seen repeatedly in the neighborhood by the patient is again another component; and the man of the scene, which in face is a stranger, yet seems so familiar and becomes identified with the ice delivery man through his actions and attitude, forms again another component, or really two other components, since his face is evidently taken from some other source in the events of the patient's life.

Similar compositions are met with in dreams and were typically met with in the patient's dreams, of which I mention the following, with a brief report of the events which gave the impulse to it.

One day the patient had an altercation with a conductor of a street car concerning a transfer ticket. It came to hard words on either side. The conductor was an Irishman, and another Irishman, who was a passenger, took his part against her, becoming very angry. The second night following this event, patient had the following dream: She also had an altercation with a man, but this occurred on the street.

The man was passing her and in doing so almost threw her over. He passed on, but the patient turned around and scolded him, asking whether he could not see which way he was walking. Another person who passed by interfered, saying that patient should not scold an older person, and using the same words which the Irishman in the street car had used in taking the conductor's part against her.

Analysis of the dream elicited the following additional facts:

The interfering man of the dream resembled in manner and stature the conductor of the street car, whereas the man who knocked against her in the dream bore likeness to the interfering man of the street car, so that there was a reversal of roles or exchange of personalities in the dream, as compared with the real events in the street car. This exchange was not quite perfect, not quite unmixed, however. For the man in the dream who knocked against her, while resembling the interfering man in the street car scene in *manner and dress*, was almost indetical in attire and *physiognomy* with the real owner of the dog which had figured in the hysterical attack above related. On the other hand, the interfering man of the dream, while having the manner and the thin and short stature of the conductor of the street car, had no facial likeness to any one she (consciously) knew, whereas his clothing was a checked suit, exactly like the one worn by a remote relative of the patient, who played an important part in her life.

The street locality of the dream was one that she recognized as belonging to a street in her neighborhood and which had aroused her attention two weeks previously and awakened old associations connected with it.

The dream scene, therefore, just like the scene in the hysterical attack, was compounded from various sources: First: From the street car event, with reversal of roles of two of the acting parties. Second: From a street scene, seen by her two weeks previously and arousing old recollections. Third: From the facial appearance and attire of the owner of the dog which had appeared in the scene of the hysterical attack. Fourth: From events in the patient's life connected with a remote relative of hers, the connection being estab-

lished by the identity of the dress of that relative with the dress of one of the actors in the dream.

A further interesting feature in this dream is the amalgamation of different persons in one; as, for instance, the man in the dream who knocked against the patient and who in dress resembled the interfering man of the street car scene, but at the same time also resembled the owner of the dog in this respect. Another amalgamation or mixture is that of the interfering man of the dream, who, while resembling in attire a remote relative of patient, looked like the conductor of the street car in manner and stature, whereas his face was like no one's she (consciously) knew.

Such amalgamations or mixtures, leading often to identifications of peculiar kind, occur frequently in dreams, not only of hystericals but also of normal persons. This is demonstrated by the results of Freud's analysis of his own dreams, which I have found amply verified on myself as well as on others. But such amalgamations or mixtures of persons or other objects also often occur in hysterical states of obnubilation of consciousness, thus indicating the parallelism between one and the other.

The same is true of the reversal of roles observed in the dream just related, in which the personality of the aggressing man was partly exchanged with that of the interfering man in the street car scene of real life, while that of the interfering person of the dream was partly exchanged with the one of the aggressing person (the street-car conductor) of real life.

That such reversals or exchanges occur also in the hysterical states, namely, that an exchange of roles or of personality, complete or partial, may occur between persons or subjects of real life on the one hand and those figuring in hysterical states on the other, is illustrated by the following case, related by Janet,* which I report slightly abbreviated:

A hysterical woman, thirty-five years old, while taking a walk in the zoölogical garden during her menstrual period, was frightened by a lioness that, as it was reported, seemed ready to rush upon her. Following this event she had crises

*Pierre Janet: *The Major Symptoms of Hysteria*. Fifteen clinical lectures given in the Medical School of Harvard University. New York. Macmillan Co. 1907.

of the following kind: "She runs on all fours, roars, rushes on people, trying to bite them; and although she was anorexic before her attack and could eat very little, now she pounces on all sorts of food, picks it up with her teeth, and devours bits of paper and small objects she finds on the floor. In a word, she acts a comedy, for it becomes certain that she studies her part, and that she often replaces real actors by metaphors. For instance, she looks in a drawer for photographs, generally children's portraits, and tries to eat them up. Without any doubt, as she is unable to devour real persons, she devours them in effigy."

Another point of interest in the street quarrel dream above related by me was the role of the checked suit figuring in that dream. This article of clothing worn by one of the acting parties in the dream appears at first sight as an object of no importance to the patient, but it gained great significance as a psychic factor, in her case, by having been worn in actual life by a relative of hers, and by leading up to the discovery of events which concerned her very deeply. She had been interested in a friendly, helping way in this relative, and the latter repaid in a very bad manner the kindness shown him. Living in the same house as patient, he entered her sleeping room on two occasions when she was in bed, with apparently no good intent. These transgressions on the part of her relative, to judge from the records of patient's case, led to an accumulation of her hysterical attacks at that time.

In other words, a factor of decided psychic importance for the patient figured under the guise of an object in itself entirely insignificant, irrelevant to her, and analysis of the dream, that is, tracing of the dream thoughts, revealed the psychic factor of real value. In this manner the analysis of dreams may become an important adjuvant to other methods employed for tracing subconsciously acting causes of psychic disturbances. Particularly psychoanalysis may thus be directly supplemented and facilitated, although we must not overestimate the value of the help thus gained.

It is impossible in the short time allotted for this paper to discuss all the points of analogy between dreams and hysterical states, which form a fascinating study. In closing this part of the subject I wish to allude to one point, however,

which is closely connected with the one just related, and the elucidation of which has been largely the work of Freud. I have already mentioned in the beginning of my paper how in dreams, by a process of substitution, the emotions may suffer displacements, attaching themselves to other objects than those really meant; how, for instance, a scene of mourning, instead of producing sorrow, may awaken feelings of joy; this incongruous reaction having its cause in the fact that the joy is not aroused by the object of mourning presented in the dream, but by another one quite different in nature, although more or less closely associated with it in subconscious thought.

An instance of this is the case reported by Freud* of a lady who dreamed seeing the only son of her sister lying on the bier. This dream Freud extensively interprets as a wish fulfilment. It does not signify, however, that she wishes the death of the little nephew. The real wish concealed under this guise is that of seeing again, after long privation of this sight, a certain loved person, whom she had actually once seen by the corpse of another nephew, after a similarly long period of privation of his sight.

Similar substitutions and displacements of emotions occur in hystericals, and give us an insight into the apparently unfounded or disproportionate, sometimes seemingly absurd emotional reactions which we observe in these patients.

We see a hysterical fall into a rage at the sight of a hat of a certain shape and wonder at the inadequacy of the reaction, but on making a psychoanalysis we may find that such a hat used to be worn by some person who had offended or exposed the patient in some very painful or atrocious manner. The patient has in the mean time tried to forget the insult and has seemingly succeeded. But actually the emotion has been retained and has attached itself to the harmless object intimately associated with the object of offense, namely to the hat, which thereby has become an object of hate to the patient. This hate the latter cannot explain, since by the suppression above alluded to, the associations of the hat with the person who wore it has been obliterated from conscious memory.

Similarly, a girl may burst into incontrollable crying

*Freud. l. c.

by the sight of a certain flower, because such flowers were in bloom near the place where her lover was killed by an accident, an association which she herself has consciously forgotten.

Seen in this light, the apparent incongruities of emotional reactions lose much of their absurdity, and it is very instructive to observe here again the parallelism between dreams and hysterical states in the mechanism bringing them about.

Another subject of considerable interest are the dreams by suggestion. These form an interesting problem in their relation to actual dreams, a problem which I shall be able to only briefly touch upon in this paper. If dreams can be suggested and made to materialize in every detail suggested, we may naturally ask ourselves whether it is justifiable to give natural dreams the complicated structure which Freud attributes to them from an analysis of the dream thoughts, and whether the dream thoughts themselves as traced by the analysis are not suggested. Undoubtedly this is a question not to be answered offhand. Nevertheless the connections which can be established between the traced dream-thoughts and real events on one side and the manifest contents of the dream on the other, are sometimes so clear and evident that there can be no doubt as to their reality. Moreover, the nature of dreams varies considerably in complexity. In children particularly, as Freud shows, they are much simpler, and they do at times represent almost exact reproductions of real occurrences. In this way they approach considerably the suggested dreams, where such occur with exact reproduction of all suggested details.

That dreams of this kind take place is demonstrated by the following instances: Forel, in his book "Der Hypnotismus," fifth edition, page 69, relates: "To a man who smiled at hypnotism my friend Prof. Dr. Otto Stoll declared quietly that in the following night at twelve o'clock he will dream this and that about the devil. The gentleman in question did not feel quite at ease, for he wanted to remain awake to escape the prophecy. But look, shortly before twelve he fell asleep on his chair, and at twelve o'clock sharp he awoke, exactly at the episode of the suggested dream at

which the awakening had been ordered to him. The dream had materialized in every point.

We see that in this case mere waking suggestion sufficed to bring about the result.

The report of this case is somewhat brief, and while quite succinct as to the statement that the dream materialized in every point and in the order suggested, does not give a description of the dream, so that we are not quite sure whether some additional things may not have been woven into it. Such weaving in of events not suggested took place in the following suggested dream of a hysterical patient of mine which, as intended, took place during hypnosis itself. This dream is of further interest because demonstrating how suggested landmarks may successfully be applied for ascertaining given stages of the dream, or for ascertaining its completion. Since it is very essential for a successful hypnosis to obtain clues as to whether suggestions are materializing, the value of the landmarks above mentioned becomes evident.

Here is the suggested dream, the specific purpose of which will be explained later: Patient shall dream of having a meal consisting of beans, sweet cabbage, apples, and melons, to be eaten with great appetite and relish, and leaving no injurious consequences, and causing the resolution of buying some beans and cabbage the next day and eating them with the same relish and lack of unpleasant or injurious symptoms. The landmarks suggested to ascertain the materialization of the dream were the following:

1. The beans suggested for the dream were to be over-salted and to make her so thirsty that, after eating them (in the dream), she would "de facto" (not imaginatively, i.e., in the dream only), take hold of the glass of water placed on the table beside her and drink it.

2. After completion of the dream she would "de facto" wipe her mouth, as is done after a finished meal. On awakening she was to relate the dream spontaneously.

All the dream suggestions took fully, with the exception that she did not relate the dream spontaneously. When asked, however, whether she had a dream, she affirmed it, and when questioned further of what she dreamt, she said, "of those darned beans; I dreamt I ate them with great

pleasure." She then proceeded to the report of the dream, rendering every suggested detail. But on being asked to describe the dream exactly, she gave the following addition, i.e. dream fabrication of her own: She did not want to eat the beans first, but then tried one and it tasted so well that she took more and ate quite a few. She also on inquiry gave the (non-suggested) stage setting of the dream, which was to have occurred in the kitchen, although the picture of it seemed to be rather vague to her.

Parenthetically, the fact that patient failed to respond to one suggestion, i.e. to that of relating the dream spontaneously, deserves a word of mention. It shows how failures of suggestions may be produced by not helping the patient along a little. Had this not been done in this case the materialization of all the other suggestions relating to the dream would have remained in doubt, in spite of the materialization of the suggested landmarks.

One important aid which suggested dreams can give us is the re-enforcement of hypnotic suggestions. The manner in which this is done is well illustrated in the instance just related. The patient referred to suffered from disturbances of gastric and intestinal functions, which inquiry into her antecedents had demonstrated to be due largely to psychic causes. Beans and sweet cabbage, for instance, caused her such aversion that the smell of them alone was enough to produce nausea or even vomiting, while fruit and melons caused diarrhoea traceable, also, to great extent, to psychic causes. How largely the psychic element entered in the production of these gastric disturbances is evidenced by the fact that once the sight of a girl wiping her nose with the underskirt and looking at the ejected secretion produced in patient a crisis of anorexia and vomiting, which lasted over three weeks. It is in such cases in which the psychogenetic factors of some symptoms are so strongly developed that putting the therapeutic suggestion in form of a dream may, if successful, lend much strength to the suggestion by shaking the patient's belief that certain things are invariably injurious, and by making them see the possibility of the beneficial effects thereof. It was with this purpose in view that the above-related "dinner dream," as I will shortly call it,

was suggested, and it had, temporarily at least, the desired end.*

Instead of suggesting a dream to occur in hypnosis one may also suggest posthypnotic dreams, to take place, for instance, in the night following the hypnotic session. Such a dream may give the patient a firmer conviction of spontaneity than a dream occurring during hypnosis, in which the possible influence of the hypnotizer may, vaguely, be thought of. The dream may thus, particularly in persons somewhat superstitiously inclined, be given prophetic power.

For instance, in the case just related a dream could have been suggested in which she would see herself in the future as healthy and strong, free from all the disturbances mentioned, because she had found out the erroneousness of her belief in the injuriousness of the things which she had avoided.

A further aid which suggested dreams can give us is the recollection of pathological crises or of occurrences of actual life that may have important bearing on pathological states.

We may suggest to a hysterical, for instance, to have a recollection of a hysterical crisis by living through it again in the form of a dream. This information may give us important clues regarding the events of real life on which the crisis was built up.

Such information we have, to be sure, to take with a certain caution, as it may be delusive, colored by auto-suggestions, but we may find other facts to help us establish the truth of the knowledge gained.

Aside from suggested dreams therapeutic aid may be obtained in an indirect way by inquiry about the occurrence and nature of spontaneous dreams. Often what is related as dream is not a dream, but a hysterical crisis, or a night terror, or something else, and asking the patients to relate their dreams may lead to the discovery of such states.

An interesting illustration to this view is furnished by the following crisis occurring in the patient to whom I had suggested the "dinner dream." When asked about her dreams she stated that when she was a child of seven years

*The permanency of the result in such cases depends on various factors and was in this case partly frustrated by the fact that, for certain reasons, the treatment had to be discontinued.

she was for a long time haunted by a dream which occurred almost every night. She saw a woman dressed in a white wrapper, who stood in a corner high up. She would scream and say that the woman wanted to take her. Part of the dream also was that patient thought she and her mother were being rocked in their bed. This whole scene used to begin like a dream, but later she would wake up and see the white woman with her eyes open. Inquiry during hypnosis, with the suggestion that patient would have a full understanding of the meaning of the haunting scene, with recollection of the events of actual life which formed the basis of it, revealed the interesting fact that the white woman of the haunting scene was a woman who had died a few days before the said scene first appeared to the patient, and whose corpse she had from a distance seen lying on a semi-inclined bier.

Thus the inquiry into the dreams of the patient revealed the presence of crises which might be classed as night terrors, and which apparently in connection with other factors, which it is beyond the scope of this paper to mention here, continued to act subconsciously, causing a vague fear in patient, a fear to be alone, particularly at night. It is particularly the frequent repetition of the same alleged "dream" that ought to make us doubtful as to its being a true dream; the alleged dream being in such cases frequently a hysterical crisis or a night terror or something similar.