

Reconsidering Freud's dream theory

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Summary. This article aims at facilitating the understanding of Freud's dream theory for psychoanalytic as well as non-psychoanalytic clinicians and scientists. The new perspective is based on a section of *An Outline of Psychoanalysis* (Freud, 1938) which, to date, does not appear to have been considered adequately. This section comprises a dense summary of Freud's dream theory applying the structural viewpoint (ego, id and super-ego). It is suggested that this section be considered as akin to a set of explanatory notes for the reading of *The Interpretation of Dreams* (Freud, 1900), which is illustrated herein by applying it to several paragraphs of this work. In doing so, it becomes apparent that *The Interpretation of Dreams* does not need to be re-written in order to integrate the structural viewpoint. Rather, both the topographical (conscious, preconscious and unconscious) and the structural viewpoint can be elegantly merged. Finally, the introduced perspective is compared to previous psychoanalytic contributions, implications for clinical application are discussed, and relevant empirical research findings are summarized.

Keywords: Dream, psychoanalytic dream theory, Freud, sleep protection function

1. Introduction

This paper aims at facilitating the understanding and handling of Freud's dream theory and can thus be classified as a contribution of psychoanalytic conceptual research. The following hypothetical summary reflects how Freud's book *The Interpretation of Dreams* (Freud, 1900), which represents an early stage of his theoretical developments, is frequently understood: The mental life of human beings is not only a matter of consciousness, but to an even greater degree, a matter of the unconscious. The unconscious is a container of many crude wishes and fantasies incompatible with the ideals and morals of a well socialized adult: a hoard of lustfulness and aggression, including incestuous wishes towards mother and death-wishes against the rival father. While awake, consciousness controls these "ghosts". During sleep, this control is weakened, but sleep also blocks the access to the motor system so that the sleeper will not go and murder his father. There is still the danger, however, that those wishes may become conscious, which will not be a pleasant experience. For this reason, the wishes have to be subjected to censorship which uses mechanisms called displacement, condensation, considerations of representability and symbolization. This process is called the dream-work, by which a latent dream-thought and a manifest dream content are formed. The former contains a modified fulfilment of such wishes, hidden behind the manifest content. So, the dream is a wish-fulfilment. If the analyst succeeds in going back this way, unraveling the dangerous unconscious wishes, he successfully uses what Freud in the second edition appearing in 1909 (p. 608) called the "royal road to a knowledge of the unconscious activities of the

mind". But the dreamer has to help him by producing free associations to each element of the manifest dream.

Such a hypothetical summary may reflect Freud's struggling with the challenges of his new approach. The first difficulty relates to the definition of the term wish and the statement that every dream should be a wish-fulfilment. It remains unclear if wishes are considered to be expressions of drives or defenses against drives (c.f. Spanjaard, 1969, p. 228). Applied on dream work, this differentiation refers to wishes as the *cause initiating dream work* as compared to wish-fulfilment as the *result of dream-work*, allowing sleep protection. Thus, a confusing double use of the term wish has to be acknowledged. Or even a triple use, considering Freud's assumption that the dream guards the *wish of the ego to continue to sleep*. This central issue will be the focus of the following section (2.).

The second difficulty relates to the concept of sleeping consciousness and to the question of how it can maintain certain functions (e.g., controlling the emergence of undesirable repressed fantasies). This problem goes back to the early stage of Freud's theory when he published *The Interpretation of Dreams*. Freud developed his dream concept under the framework of the topographic viewpoint, i.e., in terms of consciousness, pre-consciousness, and unconsciousness. Many authors assume that he never applied his structural viewpoint (introducing the agencies id, ego, and super-ego) onto the topic of dreaming (e.g., Arlow & Brenner, 1976). Arlow and Brenner (1964) are generally considered to be the first and most important authors applying Freud's structural theory to his dream theory. They proposed to *replace* the topographic viewpoint prevailing in *The Interpretation of Dreams* by the structural one. In consequence, the crucial distinction between (pre-) conscious and unconscious mental phenomena, and therefore between the manifest and the latent dream gets lost.

Many authors did not take into consideration, however, that Freud had already summarized his dream-theory under the structural viewpoint on seven pages in the fifth chapter of his *An Outline of psychoanalysis* (Freud, 1938). In this paper, we follow Binswanger's (2008) suggestion to focus on

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the 5th chapter of the *Outline of Psychoanalysis* and explore the hypothesis that it could be used as a sort of explanatory notes for re-reading Freud's *Interpretation of Dreams*. We seek to illustrate that, by doing so, the confusion around the term "wish" can be resolved. Furthermore, we intend to demonstrate that a re-reading of *The Interpretation of Dreams* is possible without replacing the topographic viewpoint by the structural one as suggested by Arlow and Brenner (1964), but by elaborating how the two viewpoints intertwine.

2. "Wish" and "wish-fulfilment"

Obviously, Freud used the term wish with a double meaning: The first represents "a demand of the id for the satisfaction of a drive" (Freud, 1938 p. 169). The second is represented in the form of wish-fulfilment in order to protect sleep. A third aspect, the wish of the ego to continue to sleep, is less confusing and will therefore not be emphasized here. In the first meaning, the wish stands at the *beginning*; in the second, *at the end of dream work*. The first meaning is associated with the sleep-disturbing impulses; the second, with the latent dream thoughts protecting sleep. The original aim of Freud's double use was ostensibly to give evidence for the idea that dreams are formed in an analogous way to neurotic symptoms: as a compromise between a drive impulse and a defense against it. However, this double use of the same term complicates the understanding of the whole dream theory, giving rise to much confusion.

We propose to distinguish different approaches to the term "wish" when using it under the viewpoint of the first Freudian topic, as in *The Interpretation of Dreams*, in contrast to the second one, as used by Freud in *An Outline of Psychoanalysis*.

In the first, we may start at one of Freud's definitions:

"[...] that the accumulation of excitation [...] is felt as unpleasure and that it sets the apparatus in action with a view to repeating the experience of satisfaction, which involved a diminution of excitation and was felt as pleasure. A current of this kind in the apparatus, starting from unpleasure and aiming at pleasure, we have termed a 'wish'; and we have asserted that only a wish is able to set the apparatus in motion and that the course of the excitation in it is automatically regulated by feelings of pleasure and unpleasure" (Freud, 1900 p.598).

This is a very sophisticated, quasi operational definition. For practical reasons, a wish may be defined to be the psychic representation of one or more drive impulses. The representation may be conscious, preconscious or unconscious. Hence, there are conscious, preconscious and unconscious wishes and fantasies as well. If the wish is met by defenses, there is a conflict. In dreams and in neurotic symptoms, the conflict may result in a compromise. In dreams, the compromise leads to *wish fulfillment* that allows the continuation of sleep; in neurosis, it leads to the formation of symptoms that allow, under the given external and internal circumstances, the best possible adaption in everyday life.

In the second topic, where drive impulses are conceptualized as originating in the id and being shaped by the unconscious ego right from the beginning, a "wish" is rather the *result* of what the ego has done with an original drive impulse, than the psychic representation of such an impulse originating in the id (Morgenthaler, 2004). Hence, we consider a wish to belong to the ego rather than to the id.

From the perspective of the second topic, it doesn't seem adequate to label "a current of this kind", a drive impulse and its psychic representation, a "wish". Hence, we propose to consider Freud's theory of "wish-fulfillment" as regarding the *result* of dream work rather than its *origin*.

Whenever the term "wish" refers to the *origin* of dream work, i.e. a sleep-disturbing drive impulse originating in the id, it should be replaced by the phrase "a demand [of the id, addition by the authors] upon the ego for the satisfaction of a drive" (Freud, 1938 p. 169), which can be shortened to a *demand of the id*. In the following sections, we show in more detail how this terminology might be implemented with a re-reading of *The Interpretation of Dreams*.

When the term "wish" refers to the *result* of dream work, it coincides with its fulfilment, a performance of the unconscious ego aiming to protect sleep. The sleep-protecting *function* of dreams will be central in our arguments, and wish-fulfilment – or the *attempt* at wish-fulfilment – is considered to be the *means* by which one accomplishes sleep protection.

3. Analyzing *An Outline of Psychoanalysis*

Freud repeatedly turned his attention to the question of the initiation of the dream work. In his *Remarks on The Theory and Practice of Dream-Interpretation*, Freud (1923 p. 111) introduced the following distinction of two different dream types:

"It is possible to distinguish between dreams from above and dreams from below, provided the distinction is not made too sharply. [...] This distinction calls for no modification in the theory of dreams."

This distinction is further elaborated in the *Outline*:

"It is best to begin by pointing out that the formation of a dream can be provoked in two different ways. Either a drive-impulse [we replace "instinct" by "drive" as the translation of Trieb without further notice] which is ordinarily suppressed (that is, an unconscious wish) finds enough strength during sleep to make itself felt by the ego, or an urge left over from waking life [...] finds reinforcement during sleep from an unconscious element. In short, dreams may arise either from the id or from the ego" (Freud, 1938 p. 166). Regarding Freud's equation of drive-impulses and unconscious wishes we agree with Laplanche and Pontalis (1973, p. 482) in that "It is notable, however, that Freud does not always use the word 'wish' in as strict a sense as that laid down in the definition quoted above."

Without ceremony, Freud applies the structural viewpoint to dream theory. Evidently, he attributes "dreams from above" to the ego and "dreams from below" to the id. He does so without giving up the notion of the unconscious: In dreams from above, the "urge left over from waking life [...] finds reinforcement during sleep from an unconscious element". Hence, Freud's statements illustrate how the topographical point of view (conscious, preconscious and unconscious) intertwines with the structural viewpoint (ego, id and super-ego).

"Thus the dream work is essentially an instance of the unconscious working-over of preconscious thought-processes" (Freud, 1938, p. 167).

This is a very condensed statement that we try to explicate as follows: Evidently, unconscious mental material can only disturb sleep when it is transformed into preconscious thought processes. At that moment, the dream work, performed by the unconscious parts of the ego, begins to work-over these preconscious thought processes, creating the dream.

Freud's statements are further clarified by the following, crucial sentences:

"With the help of the unconscious, every dream that is in process of formation makes a demand upon the ego — for the satisfaction of a drive, if the dream originates from the id; for the solution of a conflict, the removal of a doubt or the forming of an intention, if the dream originates from a residue of preconscious activity in waking life. The sleeping ego, however, is focused on the wish to maintain sleep; it feels this demand as a disturbance and seeks to get rid of the disturbance. The ego succeeds in doing this by what appears to be an act of compliance: it meets the demand with what is in the circumstances a harmless fulfillment of a wish and so gets rid of it. This replacement of the demand by the fulfillment of a wish remains the essential function of the dream work" (Freud, 1938, p. 169-170).

We comment on this crucial text-passage in detail: "With the help of the unconscious": The unconscious id or the unconscious ego helped to form the preconscious "demands upon the ego" described below; "every dream that is in process of formation": We explicate the word "dream" in this context into "hallucinatory experience during sleep with the potential to be remembered"; "makes a demand upon the ego" This demand acts as an *internal* mental stimulus with the potential to disturb sleep; in this context, we restrict our reasoning to dreams resulting from *internal, mental* sleep-disturbing stimuli as opposed to physical stimuli presented during sleep; "[a demand] for the satisfaction of a drive, if the dream originates from the id": Dreams from below. The confusing term "an unconscious wish" does not appear anymore in this explanation of his theory by Freud; "[a demand] for the solution of a conflict, the removal of a doubt or the forming of an intention [realization of a resolution], if the dream originates from a residue of preconscious activity in waking life": Dreams from above. Freud mentions three kinds of demands resulting from a residue of preconscious activity in waking life. The third one, "the forming of an intention" doesn't make sense. Translating "*Herstellung eines Vorsatzes*" into "the realization of a not yet accomplished resolution" might be the better choice, as Freud probably means the putting into practice of a resolution. Resolutions made on New Year's Eve are more than simple intentions, and the problem is not their forming but their keeping.

When Freud writes "a residue of preconscious activity in waking life", does he mean "day's residues"? As already obvious from his use of the term wish, Freud often uses the same words either as everyday language or as a technical term. "Residues of preconscious activity in waking life" seems rather a use of everyday language. It describes specific items of possible sleep-disturbing stimuli, whereas the technical term "day's residues" is generally attributed to contents appearing *explicitly* in the manifest dream, i.e. as a *result* and not a *cause* of dream work. We propose to adopt this difference which is in line with the following quotations of Freud (italics added): "But what is the relation of the pre-

conscious residues of the previous day to dreams? There is no doubt that they find their way into dreams in great quantity, and that they make use of the *content of dreams* in order to penetrate into *consciousness* even during the night. Indeed they occasionally dominate the *content* of a dream and force it to carry on the activity of daytime" (Freud, 1900, p. 555). "It must be that they are essential ingredients in the formation of dreams, since experience has revealed the surprising fact that in the *content* of every dream some link with a recent daytime impression — often of the most insignificant sort — is to be detected" (ibid., p. 562).

"The sleeping ego, however, is focused on the wish to maintain sleep; it feels this demand as a disturbance and seeks to get rid of the disturbance": At this point, the term "wish" is clearly attributed to the ego and not to a drive-impulse of the id. This "wish" to continue to sleep is the motive for dream work done by the unconscious ego. It refers to the function of dreams as guardians of sleep. One can say that this is the only meaning in which the term wish can stand for itself (as opposed to "demand of the id" or "fulfillment of a wish").

"The ego [...] meets the demand with what is in the circumstances a harmless fulfillment of a wish and so gets rid of it": The *harmless* fulfillment of a wish is the *means* by which the unconscious ego performs the function of sleep-protection of any dream, regardless of whether it is "from above" or "from below". We use the term "harmless" in this context as "harmless enough to allow the continuation of sleep".

"This *replacement* of the demand by the fulfillment of a wish remains the essential function of the dream work": (emphasis by the authors). The sleep-disturbing stimulus is *replaced* by the harmless, ego-compatible fulfillment of a wish — at least harmless enough to be compatible with the continuation of sleep. The theory of wish-fulfillment does not focus on the fact that unconscious "wishes" = representations of drive-impulses, may disturb sleep, but on the fact that dream work uses wish-fulfillment in order to get rid of sleep-disturbances.

But what is the reason that Freud uses the term *replacement*, instead of saying "the transformation of the demand into the fulfillment of a wish" — e.g. by compromise formation? A quote from the *Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis* (Freud, 1915-16, Lecture IX, p. 136, emphasis in original) may give a first clue:

"Dreams are things which get rid of (psychical) stimuli disturbing to sleep, by the method of hallucinatory satisfaction".

Maybe, if the purpose is getting rid of sleep-disturbing stimuli, they really need to be *replaced*.

These crucial quotations of the *Outline* and their interpretation may serve as a sort of grid of parallels and meridians for the lecture of *The Interpretation of Dreams*. To give an example of what is meant, we reformulate the hypothetical summary of Freud's dream theory given in the introduction (p. 3, terminological modifications in italics): During sleep, *ego-control* is weakened and access of impulses to the volitional motor brain zones is inhibited. Such impulses consist of *demands upon the ego* which can be delineated into two types. The first is a demand *for the satisfaction of a drive from the id* that becomes preconscious. The second is a demand for the solution of a conflict, the removal of a doubt or the realization of a resolution, i.e. *preconscious concerns*

of the ego that are reinforced by an unconscious element. These demands are the mental sleep-disturbing stimuli that would awake the sleeper if they passed unprocessed to the *conscious ego*. Hence, the *dream work done by the unconscious ego* censors them with its *main defense mechanisms*: displacement, condensation, reversal to the contrary (we add this mechanism as Freud (1900, p. 381,327-328, 408, 434, 440, 471-481) frequently mentions it when illustrating dream work), and symbolization, considering the representability of mental material within the mostly visual character of the dream. This work operates with what Freud called the primary process. The result of this work is the latent dream-thought that *replaces* the sleep-disturbing stimulus by the *harmless fulfillment* of a wish. For the *unconscious ego* that functions and understands according to the primary process, the task is done: It got rid of the demands upon it that would be incompatible with the continuation of sleep. Conversely, for the *conscious ego*, which is operating according to the secondary process and the principle of reality, the result of the primary process is still not compatible with the continuation of sleep. It may be too absurd, puzzling or frightening, or it still might reveal aspects of the sleep-disturbing stimulus. Hence, the latent dream thought has to be transformed into a more elaborated plot that befits the secondary process. Freud calls this operation secondary revision that finally forms the manifest dream content. The better and smoother the manifest dream is formed, the better dream censorship and secondary revision have worked, the better the dream fulfills its function as a guardian of sleep.

Such a reading makes it possible that the stones in the edifice of *The Interpretation of Dreams* remain on top of one another (the metaphor of the "stones in the edifice" goes back to Ilse Grubrich-Simitis (2000, p. 1173). She writes with respect to Freud's 1925 revision of *The Interpretation of Dreams*: "For if he had actually attempted systematically to incorporate [...] the structural theory conceived in *The Ego and the Id* (1923a), hardly one stone could have remained on another in the edifice of the book"). It allows the use of chapter five of the *Outline* as explanatory notes on how to resolve some of the ambiguities of Freud's original theory. Clearly, it is not necessary to re-invent *The Interpretation of Dreams* in order to integrate the structural viewpoint. The later topic can easily be combined with the earlier one. Figure 1 illustrates the re-formulated understanding of Freud's theory on dreams instigated by internal mental stimuli.

A final comment refers to our decision to allocate the process of secondary revision within the preconscious ego (see Laplanche and Pontalis (1973, p. 412) for definitions most helpful in this context). Freud (1900, p.489, emphasis by the authors) characterized the secondary revision as follows: "This instance, however, provides us with convincing evidence that not everything contained in a dream is derived from the dream-thoughts, but that contributions to its content may be made by a psychical function which is *indistinguishable from our waking thoughts*." It appears to fit with the comprehensive realm of Freud's theory to attribute this work to the preconscious ego. It has access to all the preconscious mental material able to set the stage and deliver the costumes for the manifest dream theatre.

4. Examples in reading the *Interpretation of Dreams* in the reconsidered way

Let's take a few selected sentences from section C of Chapter VII of Freud's *The Interpretation of Dreams* as examples. In quoting them, we leave out some words [in brackets], replacing them in bold italics according to the terminology of *An Outline of Psychoanalysis*, as we interpreted it:

"It will no doubt have surprised all of us to be told that dreams [are] **work with** nothing other than fulfilments of wishes [...]. Since, then, our daytime thinking produces psychical acts of such various sorts — judgements, inferences, denials, expectations, intentions, and so on — why should it be obliged during the night to restrict itself to the production of [wishes] **wish fulfilments** alone? Are there not, on the contrary, numerous dreams which show us psychical acts of other kinds — worries, for instance — transformed into dream-shape?" (p. 550).

"We may next ask where the [wishes] **demands upon the ego for the satisfaction of a drive / representations of drive impulses** (we'll use both formulas synonymously in these examples) that [come true] **are replaced by wish-fulfilment** in dreams originate. [...] I can distinguish three possible origins for such a [wish] **demand upon the ego for the satisfaction of a drive**. (1) It may have been aroused during the day and for external reasons may not have been satisfied; in that case an acknowledged [wish] demand upon the ego for a satisfaction of a drive which has not been dealt with is left over for the night. (2) It may have arisen during the day but been repudiated; in that case what is left over is a [wish] **demand upon the ego for a satisfaction of a drive** which has not been dealt with but has been suppressed. (3) It may have no connection with daytime life and be one of those [wishes] **demands upon the ego for a satisfaction of a drive** which only emerge from the suppressed part of the mind and become active in us at night. If we turn again to our schematic picture of the psychical apparatus, we shall localize [wishes] **demands** of the first kind in the system Pcs.; we shall suppose that [wishes] **demands** of the second kind have been driven out of the system Pcs. into the Ucs., where, if at all, they continue to exist; and we shall conclude that [wishful impulses] **the representations of drive impulses** of the third kind are altogether incapable of passing beyond the system Ucs." (p. 551).

This distinction of the origin of *demands upon the ego for the satisfaction of a drive* doesn't appear in the *Outline*, but it can easily be integrated in the proposed re-formulation of Freud's dream theory, including the following fourth source.

"If we cast our minds over the dreams that are at our disposal for answering this question, we shall at once be reminded that we must add a fourth source of dream-[wishes]**demands upon the ego**, namely the current [wishful] **representations of drive impulses** that arise during the night (e.g. those stimulated by thirst or sexual needs). In the next place, we shall form the opinion that the place of origin of a dream-[wish]**demand for the satisfaction of a drive** probably has no influence on its capacity for instigating dreams" (p. 552).

"My supposition is that a conscious [wish] **representation of a drive impulse** can only become a dream-instigator if it succeeds in awakening an unconscious [wish]

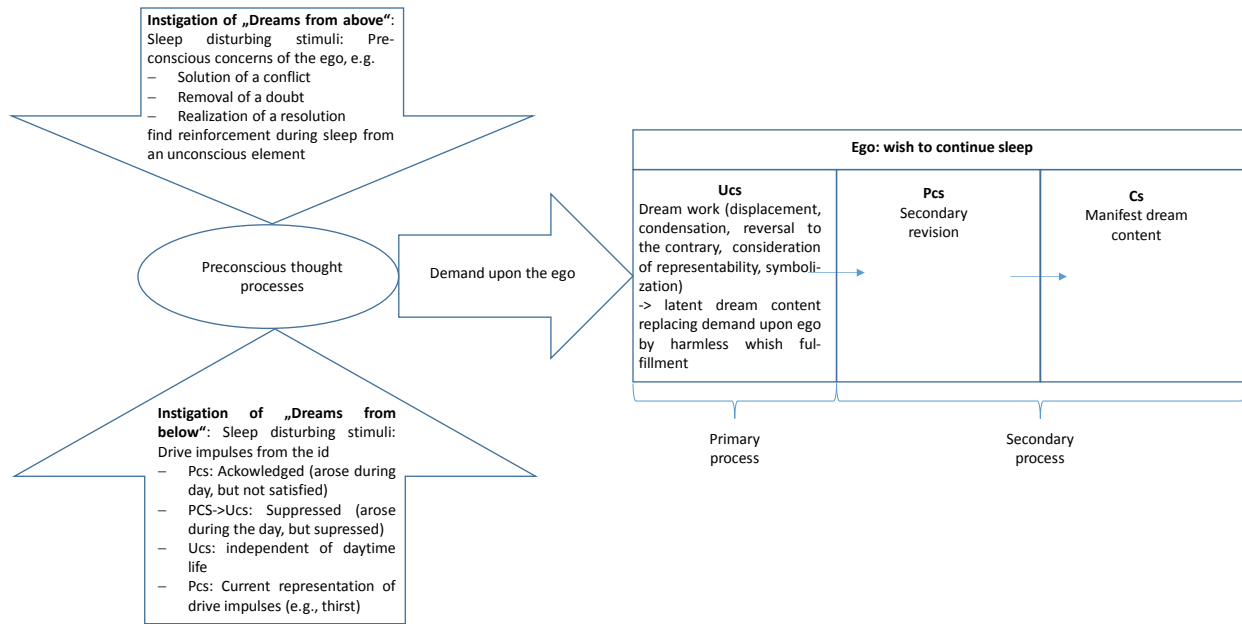


Figure 1. Re-formulated dream theory according to Freud (1900). Pcs: preconscious; Ucs: unconscious; Cs: conscious

representation of a drive impulse with the same tenor and in obtaining reinforcement from it. From indications derived from the psycho-analysis of the neuroses, I consider that these unconscious [wishes] **representations of drive impulses** are always on the alert, ready at any time to find their way to expression when an opportunity arises for allying themselves with an impulse from the conscious and for transferring their own great intensity on to the latter's lesser one. It will then appear as though the conscious [wish] **representation of a drive impulse** alone had been realized in the dream; only some small peculiarity in the dream's configuration will serve as a finger-post to put us on the track of the powerful ally from the unconscious. These [wishes] **representations of drive impulses** in our unconscious, ever on the alert and, so to say, immortal, remind one of the legendary Titans, weighed down since primeval ages by the massive bulk of the mountains which were once hurled upon them by the victorious gods and which are still shaken from time to time by the convulsion of their limbs. But these [wishes] **representations of drive impulses**, held under repression, are themselves of infantile origin, as we are taught by psychological research into the neuroses [...] (p. 553).

"I shall follow the same line of thought in now turning to consider those psychical instigations to dreaming, left over from waking life, which are other than [wishes] **representations of drive impulses**. When we decide to go to sleep, we may succeed in temporarily bringing to an end the cathexes of energy attaching to our waking thoughts. [...] But we do not always succeed in doing so, nor do we always succeed completely. Unsolved problems, tormenting worries, overwhelming impressions — all these carry thought-activity over into sleep and sustain

mental processes in the system that we have named the preconscious" (p. 554).

We hope that the quoted examples from *The Interpretation of Dreams* are able to support our hypothesis that an integration of Freud's structural theory, developed later in his life, into his earlier dream theory is possible, resulting in more clarity without losing its richness.

Finally, we quote – in the same way as the former quotations – Freud's own summary of *The Interpretation of Dreams* given in *An Evidential Dream* (1913).

"Let me recapitulate here as briefly as possible what I have said on this question in my *Interpretation of Dreams*. [The so-called 'day's residues'] **Residues of preconscious activity in waking life** can act as disturbers of sleep and constructors of dreams; they are affectively cathected thought-processes from the dream-day, which have resisted the general lowering [of energy (the words „of energy“ have been introduced by the translators and have no direct correspondence in the German original)] through sleep. These [day's residues] **residues of preconscious activity in waking life** are uncovered by tracing back the manifest dream to the latent dream-thoughts; they constitute portions of the latter and are thus among the activities of waking life — whether conscious or unconscious — which have been able to persist into the period of sleep. In accordance with the multiplicity of thought-processes in the conscious and preconscious, these [day's residues] **residues of preconscious activity in waking life** have the most numerous and varied meanings: they may be wishes or fears that have not been disposed of, or intentions, reflections, warnings, attempts at adaptation to current tasks, and so on. To this extent the classification of dreams that is under consideration seems to be justified by the content which is uncovered

by interpretation. These [day's residues] **residues of pre-conscious activity in waking life**, however, are not the dream itself: they lack the main essential of a dream. [...] The present state of our knowledge leads us to conclude that the essential factor in the construction of dreams is an unconscious [wish] **element** — as a rule an infantile [wish] **representation of a drive impulse**, now repressed — which can come to expression in this somatic or psychical material (in the [day's residues] **residues of pre-conscious activity in waking life** too, therefore) and can thus supply these with a force which enables them to press their way through to consciousness even during the suspension of thought at night. The [dream] **result of dream work** is in every case a harmless fulfilment of this unconscious [wish] **representation of a drive impulse**, whatever else it may contain — warning, reflection, admission, or any other part of the rich content of pre-conscious waking life that has persisted undealt-with into the night. It is this unconscious [wish] **element** that gives the dream-work its peculiar character as an unconscious revision of preconscious material." (p. 273-274).

This recapitulation by Freud contains some challenges to our reading. First, he uses the term "day's residue" for what we call, according to the *Outline*, "residues of preconscious activity in waking life" — reserving the term "day's residue" to contents appearing explicitly in the manifest dream. Second, Freud seems to combine characteristics of what he later calls dreams "from above" with dreams "from below". In fact, Freud's recapitulation shows exactly why the structural theory clarifies dream theory, especially by avoiding the double use of the term "wish". The structural theory allows us to read Freud's recapitulation as if he intended to explain dreams "from above". In those, the "residues of pre-conscious activity in waking life" need "reinforcement from an unconscious element". This element may be what we call not a wish but a *representation of a drive impulse*; but it might also have other sources as a repressed memory of a traumatic experience.

5. Comparison with selected examples of literature

The application — in *An Outline of Psychoanalysis* — of the theory of the agencies on dream theory by Freud himself was often overlooked, e.g. by Erikson (1954), Arlow and Brenner (1964) or Morgenthaler (2004). As far as we are aware, only Beland (1991, p. 630) points to the fact that there is „a temporary use of the structural theory in explaining dreams“, and Langs (1971, p. 166) notices that Freud's "final comments on the sources of dreams [...]" were "[...] couched [...] in structural terms". Turnbull and Solms (2007), Grubrich-Simitis (2000) and Johnson (2001) also mention the *Outline*, however, none of these authors mentions Freud's first-time introduction of the structural viewpoint into his original dream theory. Further references to the *Outline* are made by Spanjaard (1969), Levine (1998), and Blechner (2001).

Spanjaard (1969, p. 223) noted: „The structural theory had little effect on Freud's view regarding dreams. In 1923 (1923b) we first see a distinction being made between 'dreams from above and dreams from below' (p. 111), and not until 'An Outline of Psychoanalysis' does he state that

'dreams may arise either from the id or from the ego' [...]".

Later on, he integrally cited Freud's (1938, p. 166) quote analyzed herein (c.f. 3.) and comments:

"Of course, this is in agreement with the examples from 'The Interpretation of Dreams', such as the *Irma dream*, the well-known dreams of convenience, and the dreams instigated by bodily needs, in which the infantile wish is no longer so readily apparent. [...] Even if one continues to use the attempt at wish-fulfilment as one's point of departure, one cannot escape the difficulty of deciding what should be interpreted as wish-fulfilment, and what as a defence" (p. 227-228).

Obviously, this difficulty in conceptualizing the wish-fulfilment as a result of defence processes (dream work) protecting the sleeping ego from demands resulting from internal or external sleep-disturbing stimuli roots in the misleading double use of the term wish referring to beginning and end of dream generation.

Our summary of the role of day's residues (section 3.) is in line with the interpretation of the *Outline* by Langs (1971, p. 504):

"In *An Outline of Psychoanalysis*, Freud (1940) offered his final comments on the sources of dreams, couched this time in structural terms. [...] To summarize briefly, Freud thought that every dream is prompted by one or more experiences of the dream day. These events are related to intrapsychic life and dreams in two major ways: first, a repressed, infantile, unconscious fantasy or instinctual drive from the id seeks out external experiences as vehicles through which it may gain disguised gratification in a dream; and second, a reality experience may, through the ego, stir up unconscious, infantile fantasies which then seek discharge expression in the dream. Usually, both processes work together".

Levine (1998, p. 38-39), in his analysis of Erikson's famous paper entitled "The Dream Specimen of Psychoanalysis", quoted Freud's *An Outline of Psychoanalysis*:

"And even Freud (1940), who said: 'Every dream that is in process of formation makes a demand upon the ego - for the satisfaction of an instinct, if the dream originates from the id; for the **solution of a conflict, the removal of a doubt or the forming of an intention if the dream originates from residue of preconscious activity in waking life**' (pp. 169-170, bold italics added)".

The aim of this quotation remains unclear to some degree. Should it underline that even Freud, at the end of his life, made the same shift as Erikson:

"Whereas for Freud, the work of the dream was to disguise the wish and create an hallucination that represented its symbolic fulfillment, for Erikson that was only a part of the dreamwork. For him, the dream was also an adaptive response to an acute, even if attenuated, conflict or life crisis" (Levine, 1998, p. 38)?

Again, it becomes obvious how confusion between the terms wish, wish-fulfilment and sleep-disturbing stimuli hinders a clear understanding of Freud's statements. Or does it suggest — as the next author does — that Freud abandoned his statement that dreams always work with a wish-fulfilment or an attempt at a wish-fulfilment?

Such a (mis-)understanding is supported by Blechner (2001, p. 16) who made a big case against Freud's theory of wish fulfillment:

"Even Freud questioned whether all dreams are the product of wish fulfillment. Already in the Dora Case (1905) he wrote that the meaning of a dream could be 'of as many different sorts as the process of waking thought. ... In one case it would be a fulfilled wish; in another a realized fear; or again a reflection persisting into sleep; or an intention; or a piece of creative thought' (p. 68). [...]"

However, Blechner evidently had overlooked that he quoted sentences by which Freud gave an example on how his theory "would have been more certain of general acceptance" rather than changing it (Freud, 1905, p. 68).

A little later, Blechner (2001, p. 16) goes on:

"Finally, in the Outline of Psychoanalysis, written near the end of his life (Freud 1940), Freud proposed two kind of dreams". Blechner cites the known quote from "With the help of the unconscious" until "residue of preconscious activity in waking life" [italics in original]. He follows: "Here, Freud is suggesting that only some dreams aim at the satisfaction of an instinct [...]"

but he appears to neglect that *all* dreams – at least try to – replace a sleep-disturbing stimulus by the harmless fulfillment of a wish.

These citations illustrate the importance of a clear definition and allocation of the terms and processes of wish and wish fulfillment. The *common denominator* of the last four authors citing from *An Outline of Psychoanalysis* lies in their tendency to demonstrate that Freud didn't consequently stick on (at least the *attempt* at) wish fulfillment as the aim of dream work. This frequent misunderstanding results from the fact that authors tended to see the wish and its fulfillment at the origin of dream work rather than as its result.

6. Clinical application

The main clinical value of a theory shaped in the described manner consists of a shift of the central interpretative question from "which dangerous unconscious wish is (partly) fulfilled by the dream?" to "which sleep-disturbing stimulus forced the sleeper to produce a remembered dream?" This widens the perspective of dream-interpretation without revising Freud's theory of the wish-fulfilling function of dreams. Wishes, conceived as "demands upon the ego for the satisfaction of a drive" can be considered as one possible dream instigator between others, e.g. preconscious concerns or conflicts that remained poorly recognized and unresolved during waking life. Binswanger (2016, p. 754-755) proposed a further expansion of possible sleep-disturbing stimuli: "Think, for example, of everything that may prevent a child from sleeping. Not only are there anxieties, deception, anger, mourning, crude drive-impulses and so forth – stimuli that we are used to recognizing as possible causes of sleep-disturbance. There are others as well, such as pleasant anticipation – e.g., of the child's birthday, a school outing or a beloved person's visit. We are less used to recognizing these kinds of emotions as causing the formation of a dream in an adult analysand. [...] Dream work takes place to prevent awakening by such strong *positive* feelings as well [...]"

In the following, we will illustrate the clinical application of our understanding of Freud's dream theory in traumatized patients who characteristically suffer from replicative and repetitive dreams that fail in sleep protection (Wittmann & de Dassel, 2015). Here, dreams may be instigated by upcoming memories of traumatic situations.:

"The dreamer observes her mother laying on the exam table in the office of her father, a medical doctor. He is standing on the mother's right side and his female aide is at the foot of the table. The dreamer knows that her mother is dying. Father says: "Keep quiet—we'll do this, it's all right." The mother dies. The dreamer is startled and screams. The father leaves the room with his aide. The dreamer continues screaming until she awakens. Binswanger (2016, p.742)"

The crucial clue to the understanding of the dream was provided by the direct speech contained in the manifest dream. Freud (1900, p. 183-184) assumed that "When anything in a dream has the character of direct speech, that is to say, when it is said or heard and not merely thought (...), then it is derived from something actually spoken in waking life". In this case, the father saying "Keep quiet—we'll do this, it's all right." turned out to be the words of a clergyman who had repeatedly abused the dreamer in early adolescence. Our perspective on posttraumatic dreams is in line with the theory of Lansky (Lansky, 1991 ; Lansky & Bley, 1995). He assumes that so-called posttraumatic dreams are instigated by the experience of shame related to interpersonal conflicts or symptoms displayed during the day preceding the dream. Dream work then applies wish fulfillment by repeating a traumatic event in the sense of a screen memory allowing for the conclusion that the tension within the psychic apparatus is related to something old and known rather than to a current conflict. The clinical focus thus shifts towards the identification of the sleep-disturbing stimulus – a current experience of shame – allowing for making sense of repetitions rather than assuming them to be without meaning (Gardner & Orner, 2009).

7. Empirical research

Freud's assumption of a sleep protection function of dreams receives empirical support from studies by Solms (1997) and Ermann et al. (Ermann, 1995; Ermann, Peichl, & Phol, 1994; Ermann, Peichl, Pohl, Schneider, & Winkelmann, 1993). Solms (1997, p. 165) found that patients with brain lesions who reported not having dream recall any more, suffered from significantly elevated sleep interruptions as compared to patients with maintained dream recall. There is, however, an ongoing debate if reports of complete dream cessation by individuals with brain lesions indicate true absence of dreaming or rather dream recall failure (for opposing positions in this debate compare Hobson (2001) and Yu (2007)). Ermann et al. (Ermann, 1995; Ermann et al., 1994; Ermann et al., 1993) compared dream recall frequencies of 26 patients suffering from psychogenic insomnia and 15 healthy controls. They considered recall rates from spontaneous as well as experimental awakenings from rapid eye movement (REM) and non rapid eye movement (NREM) sleep. Elevated spontaneous awakenings confirmed the diagnosis of insomnia in patients. Patients' dream reports from spontaneous REM awakenings were reported to be shorter, less visual, and more similar to NREM dreams. The central finding of

this study was a significantly reduced dream recall rate after spontaneous awakenings from REM sleep in patients with insomnia as compared to controls. This difference was absent after experimental awakenings from REM sleep. Thus, under intra-psychic conditions which would not have resulted in spontaneous awakening, a remembered dream is produced equally frequently (around 90%) by both groups. However, spontaneous awakenings from REM sleep are associated with reduced (60.0%) dream recall in patients but not in controls (88.9%). The authors interpret their findings as a „functional impairment of the visualization of sleep thoughts“ (Ermann, 1995, p. 179, emphasize in original, own translation) and conclude that „[...] dreaming in patients with psycho-vegetative sleep disorders [...] is [...] a mechanism protecting from the formation of the “awakening” symptom“ (Ermann et al., 1994, p. 113, own translation). Studies as the ones performed by Solms and Erman et al. strikingly illustrate the relevance of empirical research for a psychoanalytic understanding of the function(s) of dreaming.

8. Conclusion

The main characteristics of the reconsidered Freudian dream theory are summarized as follows:

1. The process of dream generation is instigated by a stimulus implying a demand upon the ego incompatible with the continuation of sleep. While psychoanalytic theory focuses on internal, mental sleep-disturbing stimuli originating either from the id (libidinous or aggressive impulses striving for satisfaction) or from the ego (preconscious concerns reinforced by an unconscious element), also external, sensory stimuli are recognized.
2. The function of the hallucinatory experiences remembered as dreams is sleep-protection.
3. Wish-fulfillment is the means to achieve this function.
4. Dream work consists of the unconscious processing of preconscious material (external or internal sleep-disturbing stimuli). It is performed by the unconscious ego that operates according to the primary process. Its main mechanisms are displacement, condensation, reversal to the contrary, considerations of representability, and symbolization.
5. Dream Work replaces sleep-disturbing stimuli by the harmless, ego-compatible fulfillment of a wish. This wish fulfillment is the content of the latent dream-thought.
6. The wish fulfillment is a compromise between the sleep-disturbing stimulus and the ego's interest to continue sleep. The result of the compromise must be ego-compatible and harmless enough to allow continuation of sleep.
7. Secondary revision, performed by the preconscious ego that operates according to the secondary process, complements dream work. It transforms the latent dream thought into a more elaborated plot that befits the conscious ego operating according to the principle of reality.
8. If the result of the previous steps does not succeed in replacing the sleep-disturbing stimulus by a sufficiently harmless fulfillment of a wish and its elaboration according to the secondary process/principle of reality, the manifest dream content evokes anxiety potentially resulting in awakening (failure of the function of sleep protection in form of a nightmare).
9. Freud's expression “a residue of preconscious activity in waking life” designating a part of a sleep-disturbing stimulus causes confusions with his term “day's residue”. We suggest using the latter one only when referring to contents appearing explicitly in the manifest dream.
10. The proposed understanding of Freud's dream theory (wish fulfillment as related to the end rather than to the beginning of dream work) expands the possibilities of its application in clinical practice, without revising Freud's theory of the wish-fulfilling function of dreams.
11. Empirical dream research testing psychoanalytic assumptions has revealed intriguing results but needs to be intensified.

As this article aims at facilitating the understanding of Freud's original dream theory, we abstain from summarizing further developments of psychoanalytic perspectives on dreaming (compare Deserno, 1999). Illustrations of two approaches of high relevance in this context – Morgenthaler's distinction between the remembered and the told dream and its application on psychoanalytic work with dreams (Morgenthaler, 2004) as well as the dream generation model of Moser and colleagues (Hortig & Moser, 2019; Moser & Von Zeppelin, 1996), which combines psychoanalytic assumptions with those from cognitive and artificial intelligence approaches – can be found in Binswanger (2016) and Wittmann et al. (2017).

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