

# Self-Expression in Dreams

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# Introduction

- Review of 5th chapter from book "Dreaming Souls" by Owen Flanagan
- Dreams are produced by activity originating in the brainstem that awakens stored or semistored thoughts and memories that are then put into some sort of narrative structure by higher brain sectors that are designed to make sense of experience by light of day, but continue to work, less efficiently, when the lights go out.
- Self-expression refer to bodily behavior or mental acts that reveal or release information about one's identity, about who one is.
- Reveals what interests me, what I care about, what about myself, or what aspect of my self, am I expressing?

- In order to understand nature, value of dreams, if it contributes anything to personal identity we need to know what person is ?
- Two wrong answers :
  1. Soul standing behind or inside each individual.ex. thief becoming saint
  2. Continuity of a living body. ex. Alzheimer's case.
- Personal identity requires a properly functioning mind-brain in a continuous living body.
- A well-functioning mind can do the job of maintaining the sort of continuity and connectedness, the memory connections, the sense of personal sameness.

# Identity Constitution

- Not everything we do, not every memory we have, is equally important for making us who we are.
- Do dreams contribute to one's identity? Do they express who one is?
- it might be that dream experiences count less than asleep thoughts because dreams are poorly remembered and largely meaningless.
- Harry Frankfurt provided a compelling argument, importance of an experience or event is tied subjectively to how much the individual involved cares about the experience or event.
- channel surfing for a couple of hours and matter little to one's identity but that I choose to spend those two hours on Sunday afternoon in front of the TV is self-expressive.
- intuition based

# Self Representation

- One might doubt that dreams are identity constitutive but still think they are self-expressive.ex.football team support
- Two aims of self-expressions.For sake of self understanding if done right can give ones true identity and for sake of public dissemination.
- philosopher Daniel Dennett insists that the self that is the center of narrative gravity is a fiction because :
  1. Self is subjected to constant revision
  2. Similar degree of freedom
  3. pinned on culturally relative narrative hooks
  4. expresses idea of what one wishes to be but isn't yet
- contradiction of self under social pressures, self plays functional role by giving meaning to life.

# Who writes dreams?

- Does dream serve any function?
- It serves psychobiological function to shed light on mental life, well being and identity.
- mind-brain's day job is to make sense of experiences and it doesn't cease that altogether during sleep.
- dream of worry created to have sense of care while awake for beloved things
- some part of brain(personal dream-maker) creates from past experience, vulnerabilities dream with thought for need of reminiscence or realism.

# Dream interpretation

- J. Allan Hobson at Harvard has assembled dream team that has been gathering phenomenological reports
- Some of interesting findings of team are: Children's dreams are populated more than adult dreams by family members and close friends, Children are as present in their dreams as adults, Children's dreams are often bizarre, but they are less often bizarre than adult dreams
- Flanagan's First Law of Dream Science is this: Bizarreness will increase the more control mechanisms are turned down and the more you have on your mind. proved by Children's dreams and adult dreams, insofar as they are bizarre, display approximately the same ratio of types of bizarreness.

# Dreams and Narratives

- Many dreams are storylike. Dreams have narrative structure. Is this an illusion ?
- earlier dream splicing idea was believed
- although each subplot may be a storylike unit, there is no story line connecting one subject to the next. Dream coherence may be in the eye of the beholder, but it is not in the text of the reports.
- later idea was squashed after finding evidences that dreams really do involve weaving meaningful, emotionally complex stories into complex narrative structures
- Splitting the scene and changing the topic are easy. Changing the essence of a person or an object is harder. It is not surprising therefore that character transformation is fairly constrained



- According to the principle of adjacency, dream segments are logically connected to those immediately preceding them and following them, but there is no overarching, coherent, or preplanned plot that spans the length of a dream.

# Dream and self

- Dreams both reflect and participate in the project of self-creation. In all probability, however, dreams have less overall causal importance
- Dreams are less sensitive to the external world than awake thought as well as less reliable at coordinating emotion
- noise-to signal ratio is much higher in dreaming than in awake cognition
- can be used as grist for the interpretative mill or as meaningless stimuli for further thought.
- express who I am when I am awake and, in all likelihood, to some lesser extent when I dream
- dreams are neither meaningless noise, nor are they a privileged mode of thought behind or beneath which lies something like our deepest, essential, or true self.