STIRRINGS OF THE RUSSIAN SPRING

THE END OF THE PROLETARIAT RISING

PETER D. POPSICLE

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Dreams Have a Meaning

In what we may term “prescientific days” people were in no uncertainty about the interpretation of dreams. When they were recalled after awakening they were regarded as either the friendly or hostile manifestation of some higher powers, demoniacal and Divine. With the rise of scientific thought the whole of this expressive mythology was transferred to psychology; to-day there is but a small minority among educated persons who doubt that the dream is the dreamer’s own psychical act.

But since the downfall of the mythological hypothesis an interpretation of the dream has been wanting. The conditions of its origin; its relationship to our psychical life when we are awake; its independence of disturbances which, during the state of sleep, seem to compel notice; its many peculiarities repugnant to our waking thought; the incongruence between its images and the feelings they engender; then the dream’s evanescence, the way in which, on awakening, our thoughts thrust it aside as something bizarre, and our reminiscences mutilating or rejecting it—all these and many other problems have for many hundred years demanded answers which up till now could never have been satisfactory.

Before all there is the question as to the meaning of the dream, a question which is in itself double-sided. There is, firstly, the psychi-
The Three Tendencies

Three tendencies can be observed in the estimation of dreams. Many philosophers have given currency to one of these tendencies, one which at the same time preserves something of the dream’s former over-valuation. The foundation of dream life is for them a peculiar state of psychical activity, which they even celebrate as elevation to some higher state. Schubert, for instance, claims: “The dream is the liberation of the spirit from the pressure of external nature, a detachment of the soul from the fetters of matter.” Not all go so far as this, but many maintain that dreams have their origin in real spiritual excitations, and are the outward manifestations of spiritual powers whose free movements have been hampered during the day (“Dream Phantasies,” Scherner, Volkelt). A large number of observers acknowledge that dream life is capable of extraordinary achievements—at any rate, in certain fields (“Memory”).

A Psychical Phenomenon

In striking contradiction with this the majority of medical writers hardly admit that the dream is a psychical phenomenon at all. According to them dreams are provoked and initiated exclusively by stimuli proceeding from the senses or the body, which either reach the sleeper from without or are accidental disturbances of his internal organs.

The dream has no greater claim to meaning and importance than the sound called forth by the ten fingers of a person quite unacquainted with music running his fingers over the keys of an instrument. The dream is to be regarded, says Binz, “as a physical process...
always useless, frequently morbid.” All the peculiarities of dream life are explicable as the incoherent effort, due to some physiological stimulus, of certain organs, or of the cortical elements of a brain otherwise asleep. (Socrates, 430 BC)

But slightly affected by scientific opinion and untroubled as to the origin of dreams, the popular view holds firmly to the belief that dreams really have got a meaning, in some way they do foretell the future, whilst the meaning can be unravelled in some way or other from its oft bizarre and enigmatical content. The reading of dreams consists in replacing the events of the dream, so far as remembered, by other events. This is done either scene by scene, according to some rigid key, or the dream as a whole is replaced by something else of which it was a symbol. Serious-minded persons laugh at these efforts—“Dreams are but sea-foam!”

A Personal Discovery

One day I discovered to my amazement that the popular view grounded in superstition, and not the medical one, comes nearer to the truth about dreams. I arrived at new conclusions about dreams by the use of a new method of psychological investigation, one which had rendered me good service in the investigation of phobias, obsessions, illusions, and the like, and which, under the name “psychoanalysis,” had found acceptance by a whole school of investigators. The manifold analogies of dream life with the most diverse conditions of psychical disease in the waking state have been rightly insisted upon by a number of medical observers.

It seemed, therefore, a priori, hopeful to apply to the interpretation of dreams methods of investigation which had been tested in psychopathological processes. Obsessions and those peculiar sensations of haunting dread remain as strange to normal consciousness as do dreams to our waking consciousness; their origin is as unknown to consciousness as is that of dreams.
It was practical ends that impelled us, in these diseases, to fathom their origin and formation. Experience had shown us that a cure and a consequent mastery of the obsessing ideas did result when once those thoughts, the connecting links between the morbid ideas and the rest of the psychical content, were revealed which were heretofore veiled from consciousness. The procedure I employed for the interpretation of dreams thus arose from psychotherapy.

This procedure is readily described, although its practice demands instruction and experience. Suppose the patient is suffering from intense morbid dread. He is requested to direct his attention to the idea in question, without, however, as he has so frequently done, meditating upon it. Every impression about it, without any exception, which occurs to him should be imparted to the doctor.

The Doctor’s Attention

The statement that will be perhaps then made, that he cannot concentrate his attention upon anything at all, is to be countered by assuring him most positively that such a blank state of mind is utterly impossible. As a matter of fact, a great number of impressions will soon occur, with which others will associate themselves. These will be invariably accompanied by the expression of the observer’s opinion that they have no meaning or are unimportant. It will be at once noticed that it is this self-criticism that prevented the patient from imparting the ideas, which had indeed already excluded them from consciousness. If the patient can be induced to abandon this self-criticism and to pursue the trains of thought which are yielded by concentrating the attention, most significant matter will be obtained, matter which will be presently seen to be clearly linked to the morbid idea in question. Its connection with other ideas will be manifest, and later on will permit the replacement of the morbid idea by a fresh one, which is perfectly adapted to psychical continuity.
Experimental Hypothesis

This is not the place to examine thoroughly the hypothesis upon which this experiment rests, or the deductions which follow from its invariable success. It must suffice to state that we obtain matter enough for the resolution of every morbid idea if we especially direct our attention to the unbidden associations which disturb our thoughts—those which are otherwise put aside by the critic as worthless refuse. If the procedure is exercised on oneself, the best plan of helping the experiment is to write down at once all one’s first indistinct fancies.

I will now point out where this method leads when I apply it to the examination of dreams. Any dream could be made use of in this way. From certain motives I, however, choose a dream of my own, which appears confused and meaningless to my memory, and one which has the advantage of brevity. Probably my dream of last night satisfies the requirements. Its content, fixed immediately after awakening, runs as follows:

“Company; at table or table d’hôte... . Spinach is served. Mrs. E.L., sitting next to me, gives me her undivided attention, and places her hand familiarly upon my knee. In defense I remove her hand. Then she says: ‘But you have always had such beautiful eyes.’ I then distinctly see something like two eyes as a sketch or as the contour of a spectacle lens.”
Elements of the Dream

This is the whole dream, or, at all events, all that I can remember. It appears to me not only obscure and meaningless, but more especially odd. Mrs. E.L. is a person with whom I am scarcely on visiting terms, nor to my knowledge have I ever desired any more cordial relationship. I have not seen her for a long time, and do not think there was any mention of her recently. No emotion whatever accompanied the dream process.

Reflecting upon this dream does not make it a bit clearer to my mind. I will now, however, present the ideas, without premeditation and without criticism, which introspection yielded. I soon notice that it is an advantage to break up the dream into its elements, and to search out the ideas which link themselves to each fragment.

The recollection of the slight event with which the evening of yesterday ended is at once called up. I left a small party in the company of a friend, who offered to drive me home in his cab.

“I prefer a taxi,” he said; “that gives one such a pleasant occupation; there is always something to look at.” When we were in the cab, and the cab-driver turned the disc so that the first sixty hellers were
visible, I continued the jest. “We have hardly got in and we already owe sixty heller. The taxi always reminds me of the table d'hôte. It makes me avaricious and selfish\(^1\) by continuously reminding me of my debt. It seems to me to mount up too quickly, and I am always afraid that I shall be at a disadvantage, just as I cannot resist at table d'hôte the comical fear that I am getting too little, that I must look after myself.” In far-fetched connection with this I quote:

“To earth, this weary earth, ye bring us,
To guilt ye let us heedless go.”

Another idea about the table d’hôte. A few weeks ago I was very cross with my dear wife at the dinner-table at a Tyrolese health resort, because she was not sufficiently reserved with some neighbors with whom I wished to have absolutely nothing to do. I begged her to occupy herself rather with me than with the strangers. That is just as if I had been at a disadvantage at the table d’hôte. The contrast between the behavior of my wife at the table and that of Mrs. E.L. in the dream now strikes me: “Addresses herself entirely to me.”

Further, I now notice that the dream is the reproduction of a little scene which transpired between my wife and myself when I was secretly courting her. The caressing under cover of the tablecloth was an answer to a wooer's passionate letter. In the dream, however, my wife is replaced by the unfamiliar E.L.

Mrs. E.L. is the daughter\(^2\) of a man to whom I owed money! I cannot help noticing that here there is revealed an unsuspected connection between the dream content and my thoughts. If the chain of associations be followed up which proceeds from one element of the dream one is soon led back to another of its elements. The thoughts evoked by the dream stir up associations which were not noticeable in the dream itself.

\(^{1}\) Foot Note 1  
\(^{2}\) Foot Note 1
Is it not customary, when some one expects others to look after his interests without any advantage to themselves, to ask the innocent question satirically: “Do you think this will be done for the sake of your beautiful eyes?” Hence Mrs. E.L.’s speech in the dream. “You have always had such beautiful eyes,” means nothing but “people always do everything to you for love of you; you have had everything for nothing.” The contrary is, of course, the truth; I have always paid dearly for whatever kindness others have shown me. Still, the fact that I had a ride for nothing yesterday when my friend drove me home in his cab must have made an impression upon me.

In any case, the friend whose guests we were yesterday has often made me his debtor. Recently I allowed an opportunity of requiting him to go by. He has had only one present from me, an antique shawl, upon which eyes are painted all round, a so-called Occhiale, as a charm against the Malocchio. Moreover, he is an eye specialist. That same evening I had asked him after a patient whom I had sent to him for glasses.
The Surprising and Enduring Role of Ordinary Spinach

As I remarked, nearly all parts of the dream have been brought into this new connection. I still might ask why in the dream it was spinach that was served up. Because spinach called up a little scene which recently occurred at our table. A child, whose beautiful eyes are really deserving of praise, refused to eat spinach. As a child I was just the same; for a long time I loathed spinach, until in later life my tastes altered, and it became one of my favorite dishes. The mention of this dish brings my own childhood and that of my child’s near together. “You should be glad that you have some spinach,” his mother had said to the little gourmet.

“Well children would be very glad to get spinach.” Thus I am reminded of the parents’ duties towards their children. Goethe’s words—

“To earth, this weary earth, ye bring us, To guilt ye let us heedless go”— take on another meaning in this connection.
Here I will stop in order that I may recapitulate the results of the analysis of the dream. By following the associations which were linked to the single elements of the dream\(^2\) torn from their context, I have been led to a series of thoughts and reminiscences where I am bound to recognize interesting expressions of my psychical life. The matter yielded by an analysis of the dream stands in intimate relationship with the dream content, but this relationship is so special that I should never have been able to have inferred the new discoveries directly from the dream itself.

The dream was passionless, disconnected, and unintelligible. During the time that I am unfolding the thoughts at the back of the dream I feel intense and well-grounded emotions. The thoughts themselves fit beautifully together into chains logically bound together with certain central ideas which ever repeat themselves. Such ideas not represented in the dream itself are in this instance the antitheses selfish, unselfish, to be indebted, to work for nothing. I could draw closer the threads of the web which analysis has disclosed, and
would then be able to show how they all run together into a single knot; I am debarred from making this work public by considerations of a private, not of a scientific, nature. After having cleared up many things which I do not willingly acknowledge as mine, I should have much to reveal which had better remain my secret. Why, then, do not I choose another dream whose analysis would be more suitable for publication, so that I could awaken a fairer conviction of the sense and cohesion of the results disclosed by analysis?

The answer is, because every dream which I investigate leads to the same difficulties and places me under the same need of discretion; nor should I forgo this difficulty any the more were I to analyze the dream of some one else. That could only be done when opportunity allowed all concealment to be dropped without injury to those who trusted me.

**The Conclusion**

The conclusion which is now forced upon me is that the dream is a sort of substitution for those emotional and intellectual trains of thought which I attained after complete analysis. I do not yet know the process by which the dream arose from those thoughts, but I perceive that it is wrong to regard the dream as psychically unimportant, a purely physical process which has arisen from the activity of isolated cortical elements awakened out of sleep.

I must further remark that the dream is far shorter than the thoughts which I hold it replaces; whilst analysis discovered that the dream was provoked by an unimportant occurrence the evening before the dream.

Naturally, I would not draw such far-reaching conclusions if only one analysis were known to me. Experience has shown me that when the associations of any dream are honestly followed such a chain of thought is revealed, the constituent parts of the dream reappear
correctly and sensibly linked together; the slight suspicion that this concatenation was merely an accident of a single first observation must, therefore, be absolutely relinquished. I regard it, therefore, as my right to establish this new view by a proper nomenclature. I contrast the dream which my memory evokes with the dream and other added matter revealed by analysis: the former I call the dream’s manifest content; the latter, without at first further subdivision, its latent content.

**Problems with the Conclusion**

I arrive at two new problems hitherto unformulated:

1. What is the psychical process which has transformed the latent content of the dream into its manifest content?

2. What is the motive or the motives which have made such transformation exigent?

The process by which the change from latent to manifest content is executed I name the dream-work. In contrast with this is the work of analysis, which produces the reverse transformation. The other problems of the dream—the inquiry as to its stimuli, as to the source of its materials, as to its possible purpose, the function of dreaming, the forgetting of dreams—these I will discuss in connection with the latent dream-content.
I shall take every care to avoid a confusion between the manifest and the latent content, for I ascribe all the contradictory as well as the incorrect accounts of dream-life to the ignorance of this latent content, now first laid bare through analysis.

The conversion of the latent dream thoughts into those manifest deserves our close study as the first known example of the transformation of psychical stuff from one mode of expression into another. From a mode of expression which, moreover, is readily intelligible into another which we can only penetrate by effort and with guidance, although this new mode must be equally reckoned as an effort of our own psychical activity. From the standpoint of the relationship of latent to manifest dream-content, dreams can be divided into three classes. We can, in the first place, distinguish those dreams which have a meaning and are, at the same time, intelligible, which allow us to penetrate into our psychical life without further ado. Such dreams are numerous; they are usually short, and, as a general rule, do not seem very noticeable, because everything remarkable or exciting surprise is absent.

**A Strong Argument**

Their occurrence is, moreover, a strong argument against the doctrine which derives the dream from the isolated activity of certain cortical elements. All signs of a lowered or subdivided psychical activity are wanting. Yet we never raise any objection to characterizing them as dreams, nor do we confound them with the products of our waking life.

A second group is formed by those dreams which are indeed self-coherent and have a distinct meaning, but appear strange because we are unable to reconcile their meaning with our mental life. That is the case when we dream, for instance, that some dear relative has

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3 Food note for this page.
4 Second food note for this page.
died of plague when we know of no ground for expecting, apprehending, or assuming anything of the sort; we can only ask ourselves wonderingly: “What brought that into my head?” To the third group those dreams belong which are void of both meaning and intelligibility; they are incoherent, complicated, and meaningless. The overwhelming number of our dreams partake of this character, and this has given rise to the contemptuous attitude towards dreams and the medical theory of their limited psychical activity. It is especially in the longer and more complicated dream-plots that signs of incoherence are seldom missing.

The contrast between manifest and latent dream-content is clearly only of value for the dreams of the second and more especially for those of the third class. Here are problems which are only solved when the manifest dream is replaced by its latent content; it was an example of this kind, a complicated and unintelligible dream, that we subjected to analysis. Against our expectation we, however, struck upon reasons which prevented a complete cognizance of the latent dream thought. On the repetition of this same experience we were forced to the supposition that there is an intimate bond, with laws of its own, between the unintelligible and complicated nature of the dream and the difficulties attending communication of the thoughts connected with the dream. Before investigating the nature of this bond, it will be advantageous to turn our attention to the more readily intelligible dreams of the first class where, the manifest and latent content being identical, the dream work seems to be omitted.

The investigation of these dreams is also advisable from another standpoint. The dreams of children are of this nature; they have a meaning, and are not bizarre. This, by the way, is a further objection to reducing dreams to a dissociation of cerebral activity in sleep, for why should such a lowering of psychical functions belong to the nature of sleep in adults, but not in children? We are, however, fully justified in expecting that the explanation of psychical processes in
children, essentially simplified as they may be, should serve as an
indispensable preparation towards the psychology of the adult.

Notes

1 This is an end note for the chapter.
2 End note for another item.
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1. Numbered List Sample 1
   a. Numbered List Sample 2
      i. Numbered List Sample 3
2. Numbered List Sample 4

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