Interpretation of Dreams

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5.1 Dreams and Sleep

Ever since Freud's seminal study, the interpretation of dreams has been the most popular area of psychoanalytic theory and technique. The analyst's interpretations of dreams are as dependent on his conception of the function of dreaming as they are on his theory of the genesis of the dream and on the modification of the dream up to the moment of the manifest dream report. What dreams a patient remembers, the way in which he relates them, and the point at which he relates them in the particular session and in the framework of the analysis as a whole are all factors contributing to the interpretation. Not least, both the interest in dreams and the (sometimes more, sometimes less productive) way they are dealt with during treatment are critical for the interpretation of the dreams themselves and for the conduct of treatment in general.

In this introductory section we must briefly outline the most important findings of experimental dream research, even though doing so makes interpreting dreams appear more problematic than before. Freud's view that dreams are the guardian of sleep must now be regarded as disproved; on the contrary, sleep is the guardian of dreams (Wolman 1979, p. VII). This is one of the fundamental conclusions which must be drawn from the many psychobiological investigations of dream and sleep. The nature of the REM phases of sleep and their specific biological and psychological functions are nevertheless still a source of scientific controversy. H. Gill's (1982) description of REM phases as a third form of mental existence underlines once more the importance of Freud's basic approach, i.e., that dreams should be seen as a *via regia* to hidden aspects of human existence.

Two questions are central to current empirical dream research: one concerns the psychic function of dreams, the other, the affective cognitive processes of dream genesis (Strauch 1981). After the discovery of REM sleep, dream research aimed at establishing relationships between dreaming and physiological processes (Fisher 1965). More recently, though, disenchantment with this correlative research has been registered. Strauch (1981), for instance, urges a return to genuinely psychological

types of problems. The goal is to reestablish the significance of dreaming as a psychological phenomenon. Freud travelled a similar path to reach his *Interpretation of Dreams* (1900a). His route has been traced by Schott (1981) in a comparative study of the development of Freud's theories. Even though we have not reached the same point of departure — some important postulates of Freud's dream theory (though not those of interpretation) have been refuted — it remains clear that physiological conditions and psychological meanings belong to completely different dimensions.

> Even in the future, it can hardly be expected that the established methods of dream interpretation as practiced by the various schools of psychotherapy will be influenced by the results of dream research. Dreaming has a value of its own in the therapeutic process, even if the underlying dream theories have to be modified. (Strauch 1981, p. 43)

Research into sleep and dreaming over the past 30 years has already done much to modify our conception of dreaming. The future will show whether and how this influences the practice of dream interpretation.

5.2 Dream Thinking

One of the thorny theoretical problems regarding dreams and dreaming is that of reaching an appropriate understanding of the relationship between image and thought. Freud himself addresses this problem in a footnote added in 1925 to *The Interpretation of Dreams*:

> I used at one time to find it extraordinarily difficult to accustom readers to the distinction between the manifest content of dreams and the latent dream-thoughts. Again and again arguments and objections would be brought up based upon some uninterpreted dream in the form in which it had been retained in the memory, and the need to interpret it would be ignored. But now that analysts at least have become reconciled to replacing the manifest dream by the meaning revealed by its interpretation, many of them have become guilty of falling into another confusion which they cling to with equal obstinacy. They seek to find the essence of dreams in their latent content and in so doing they overlook the distinction between the latent dream-thoughts and the dream-work. At bottom, dreams are nothing other than a particular form of thinking, made possible by the conditions of the state of sleep. It is the dream-work which creates that form, and it alone is the essence of dreaming — the explanation of its peculiar nature. I say this in order to make it possible to assess the value of the notorious "prospective purpose" of dreams. The fact that dreams concern themselves with attempts at solving the problems by which our mental life is faced is no more strange than that our conscious waking life should do so; beyond this it merely tells us that that activity can also be carried on in the preconscious and this we already knew. (1900a, pp. 506-507)

The immediate characteristics of dreams are, according to Freud (1933a, p. 19), manifestations of the phylogenetically more ancient modes of operation of the mental apparatus which can come to the

fore during regression in the sleeping state. Thus, he described dream language in the 13th of the *Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis* (1916/17) as being characterized by archaic traits. Dream language, which predates our development of thought language, is a picture language rich in symbolic relationships. Accordingly, man's use of symbols transcends the limits of the respective language communities (1923a, p. 242). Condensation, displacement, and plastic representation are the processes which determine form. In contrast to the waking state, in which thinking proceeds in gradations and differentiations and is oriented around logical distinctions in space and time, in sleep there is regression, with boundaries becoming blurred. This blurring of boundaries can be felt when falling asleep. Freud described the wish to sleep as a motif for the induction of this regression.

The formal elements of dream language are termed "dream work," which Freud summarized as follows: "The achievements I have enumerated exhaust its activity; it can do no more than condense, displace, represent in plastic form and subject the whole to a secondary revision" (1916/17, p. 182). The dreamer represents the world, including his self, differently than in his waking thinking and in his everyday language. Thus the problem is not just to describe the formal characteristics of dream language; the difficulty lies in their translation. Thoughts are transformed into images, and images are described in words (Spence 1982a). The direction in which the translation is made, i.e., whether from thought language into dream language or vice versa, is by no means a matter of indifference. On the contrary, keeping this in mind makes it possible to understand some of the contradictions which affect the relationship of images to latent dream thoughts and have also determined the rules of translation relevant to the psychoanalytic interpretation of dreams. The inner perceptions which are still possible under the conditions of sleep probably have to be interpreted as visual metaphors; a decisive determinant of this is the neurological process of distribution of the stimuli in the brain.

These translation rules concern the relationships between dream elements and the latent meaning elements they represent, which Freud, with strange vagueness, called "the 'genuine' thing" (1916/17, p. 151). In the *Introductory Lectures,* he initially distinguished "three such relationships — those of a part to a whole, of allusion and of plastic portrayal." The fourth is the symbolic relationship (1916/17, pp. 151, 170). According to Freud, the relationship between symbol and dream element is constant, and this facilitates translation:

Since symbols are stable translations, they realize to some extent the ideal of the ancient as well as of the popular interpretation of dreams, from which, with our technique, we had departed widely. They allow us in certain circumstances to interpret a dream without questioning the dreamer, who indeed would in any case have nothing to tell us about the symbol. If we are acquainted with the ordinary dream-symbols, and in addition with the dreamer's personality, the circumstances in which he lives and the impressions which preceded the occurrence of the dream, we are often in a position to interpret a dream straightaway to translate it at sight, as it were. (1916/17, p. 151)

This view is based on the assumption that the dreamer himself is incapable of associations endowing the symbol with meaning, because his regression in the therapeutic situation is insufficient to allow him direct access to the picture language.

What we are now concerned with is the nature of the relationship between the manifest and the latent dream element, or, as Freud put it, the relationship between dream elements and their "'genuine' thing." From the very outset there are great difficulties in understanding this relationship, as Freud himself makes clear: the manifest dream element is not so much a distortion of the latent as "a representation of it, a plastic, concrete portrayal of it, taking its start from the wording. But precisely on that account it is once more a distortion, for we have long since forgotten from what concrete image the word originated and consequently fail to recognize it when it is replaced by the image" (1916/17, p. 121). Our attention is drawn here to the basic problem of the relationship of word and image. Dream language expresses itself predominantly in visual images, and the task of therapeutic translation consists of transforming images into words and thoughts. Although thoughts must be viewed as secondary in regard to the original representation, they are of primary importance for therapy because thoughts expressed in words make the therapeutic dialogue possible. We hope we can now make it clear why the concept of latent dream thought underwent a profound change of meaning in Freud's writings: initially identical with the day residue, it eventually becomes "the 'genuine' thing" of the dream, transformed by the dream work into the manifest dream and now translated back, so to speak, by the interpretive work — *the dream work is retransformed by the interpretive work.* In contradiction to the primacy of picture language, in a certain sense the latent dream thought now takes its place on the deepest level, where it in turn fuses with the wish requiring translation.

We can now illustrate this argument by describing the transformation in meaning undergone by the latent dream thought. Freud started from the concept of interpretive work, and it was natural at the outset for him to equate the day residues (the dream motif) with the latent dream thoughts (1916/17, p.

199). In the theory of dream work, i.e., of dream genesis, the latent dream thoughts are transposed under the influence of dream censorship into a different mode of expression, which "harks back to states of our intellectual development which have long since been superseded — to picture-language, to symbolic connections, to conditions, perhaps, which existed before our thought-language had developed. We have on that account described the mode of expression of the dream-work as *archaic* or *regressive"* (1916/17, p. 199). Today we would say rather that the work on the dream is carried out with regressive methods. With the definitive change in meaning, "everything we learn in interpreting the dream" is termed latent dream thoughts (1916/17, p. 226). The great predominance of the interpretive work over the theory of dream genesis is clear from the identification of the dream censor with the resistance to the uncovering of the latent dream thoughts, which in turn represent, above all, wishes repressed to different levels. This predominance of wishes among the latent dream thoughts is explained on the one hand by the universal significance of the world of wishes, and on the other by the special attention paid by psychoanalysts from the very outset to the wishful aspect of dreams. Freud's general point of view — i.e., that dreams are in essence nothing else than a special form of our thinking (1900a, p. 506) — was neglected until Erikson published "The Dream Specimen of Psychoanalysis" (1954).

Systematic studies have now made it possible to ascertain whether dream thinking is complementary to waking thinking or whether the one blends into the other. Some findings indicate that there is a correspondence between daydreaming and night dreaming, and it can be shown that distortion and expression of affect increase progressively from daydreams through fantasies to night dreams. It has also been shown that it is possible to identify sex-specific differences for certain needs (Strauch 1981, p. 27). Generally, it is now thought that the configuration of the dream contents reflects the principal personality traits of the dreamer (Cohen 1976, p. 334).

This perspective has also gained support from the results of broad-based investigations carried out by Foulkes in the field of developmental psychology (1977, 1979, 1982). Foulkes pointed out the parallelism in cognitive and emotional development between the waking state and the dream report. Giora (1981, p. 305) also underlines the danger of taking only the clinical material into consideration and neglecting the existence of other types of dreams, e.g., logical and problem-solving dreams, when discussing the theory of dreams. We now know that dreams in REM sleep tend to be irrational and those in nonREM sleep rational, which suggests that the primary-process mechanisms of dream work are

linked to specific physiological conditions. Ferenczi (1955 [1912]) was already thinking along these lines when he reported on "dirigible" dreams. These dreams are deliberately shaped by the dreamer, who rejects unsatisfactory versions. We can sum up by saying that currently many authors reject theories which accord dream thinking a special status, preferring instead to integrate dream thinking into the general principles of psychic function.

Based on EEG examinations, pharmacological experiments, and theoretical considerations, Koukkou and Lehmann (1980, 1983) formulated a "state fluctuation model" which centers on the idea that the brain shifts between different functional states, each of which has its own selectively accessible memory stores. According to this model, the formal characteristics of dreams (i.e., the product of the primary process and the dream work) result from:

1. Recall during sleep of memory material (actual events, thought strategies, symbols, and fantasies) which was stored during development and which in the adult waking state either cannot be read completely or has been so heavily adapted to the here-and-now by the waking thought strategies that it is no longer recognizable. Also recall of new (recent) memory material and its reinterpretation according to the thought strategies of the functional states during sleep.

2. Fluctuations of the functional state in various stages of sleep (much more narrowly defined and much shorter than the four classical EEG stages) which occur spontaneously or as a response to new stimuli or signalling stimuli during sleep. This results in the transformation of contents in the course of shifting between memory stores (functional states) and leads to

3. The formation of new associations, which, in the absence of an alteration of functional state to the waking state, cannot be adapted to current reality, as the sleeper employs the thought strategies of the functional state (developmental level) he is in (Koukkou and Lehmann 1980, p. 340).

5.3 Day Residue and Infantile Wish

There is hardly a step in Freud's theory of dreams bolder than the one linking the attempt at wish fulfillment with the postulate that this must be an infantile wish, i.e., "the discovery that in point of fact *all* dreams are children's dreams, that they work with the same infantile material, with the mental impulses and mechanisms of childhood" (1916/17, p. 213). In *The Interpretation of Dreams,* Freud gives, in contrast to the infantile wish, an impressive wealth of evidence for the operational effectiveness of wishes which originate in the present, and for motives which Kanzer (1955) termed the "communicative function" of dreams. In addition, we must remember Freud's distinction between dream source and dream motor; the selection of material "from any part of the dreamer's life" (Freud 1900a, p. 169) and

the introduction of this material as causal moment of the dream are two quite separate things.

We believe that Freud retained the concept of the primacy of the infantile wish for heuristic reasons and on grounds of treatment technique. We will not go into the question of how often interpretation has succeeded in convincingly tracing dream genesis back from the day residues (the immediate precipitating factors) to infantile wishes, and showing the latter to be the deeper, more essential causes. Freud illustrated the relationship between the day residues and the (infantile) unconscious wish by comparing it to a commercial enterprise, which always needs a capitalist to provide the financing and an entrepreneur with an idea and the vision to carry it through. The capitalist is the unconscious wish, supplying the psychic energy for dream formation, the entrepreneur is the day residue. However, the capitalist could also have the idea, or the entrepreneur the capital. Thus the metaphor remains open: this simplifies the situation in practice, but impedes the attempt to understand it theoretically (Freud 1916/17, p. 226).

Later, Freud (1933a) transformed this metaphor into the theory of dream genesis from above (from the day residue) and from below (from the unconscious wish). The fact that the capitalist is equated in the original metaphor with the psychic energy which he provides reflects Freud's assumption concerning energy economy, in which psychic energy is seen as the basic force behind the stimulus, the force which creates the wish and presses for its fulfillment — even if only through a kind of abreaction in the form of hallucinatory gratification. (One can also borrow a term from ethology and call such abreactions vacuum activities in the absence of the instinct-gratifying object.)

One consequence of this theoretical assumption is that, strictly speaking, discovery of the infantile wish by interpretation must involve the rediscovery and reproduction of the original situation in which a wish, a need, or an instinctual stimulus arose but was not gratified, and therefore no genuine abreaction to the object could take place. It was against this hypothetical background that Freud voiced the expectation, even to patients themselves — as we know from the case of the Wolf Man — that penetration of the screen memory would reveal the original situation of wish and frustration (the primal scene). According to the Wolf Man, Freud's expectation was not met, i.e., the screen memory was not penetrated and the Wolf Man did not remember the primal scene. The Wolf Man's later life is well documented (Gardiner 1971), and the conclusion can be drawn that his relapses — indeed the very fact that his

illness became chronic — were due far less to inadequate illumination of infantile, incestuous temptation and frustration situations than to his idealization of Freud (and psychoanalysis) as a defense against a recent negative transference.

Implicit in this assumption that infantile wishes are the dream motor is a theory of the storage of memories. This theory was conceived by Freud in *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900a, Chap. 7) and had considerable consequences on the structuring of psychoanalytic treatment in that it laid the emphasis on remembering and on discharge of excitation. Although it is only rarely possible for the infantile wish and its environment to be reconstructed or affectively and cognitively revived with any confidence, the illumination of childhood amnesia is the ideal, particularly for more orthodox psychoanalysts. This is especially true for the time from which, for psychobiological reasons, there can probably be only sensorimotor memories. The plausibility of such reconstructions is one thing, but their therapeutic effectiveness is another, as Freud indicated clearly enough when he said: "Quite often we do not succeed in bringing the patient to recollect what has been repressed. Instead of that, if the analysis is carried out correctly, we produce in him an assured conviction of the truth of their construction which achieves the same therapeutic result as a recaptured memory" (1937 d, pp. 265-266). Occasionally, subsequent questioning of the patient's mother provides support for the plausibility of reconstructions, by yielding final confirmation of events which had been assumed from the outset and apparently already verified during analysis (e.g., Segal 1982). What value such data have in connection with the subjective truth of the fantasy life and with the alteration of the latter under the influence of treatment is a problem which we cannot go into here (see Spence 1982a).

As we have seen, there are many aspects to the demonstration of the existence of the unconscious, infantile dream wish, and we can only touch on its clinical relevance. We can summarize by saying that there are gaps in the theory of wish fulfillment with regard to demonstrating the unconscious, infantile wish element, and that this leads to other problems, e.g., how to reconcile stereotypical anxiety dreams with the theory.

The day residue functions as an affective bridge between thinking in the waking state and dream thinking. The identification of the day residue, by reference to the patient's associations, usually leads to a first, immediate understanding of the dream. This bridge function can be seen particularly clearly in

experimental dream research, when subjects are woken in the night and questioned about their dreams. Greenberg and Pearlman (1975, p. 447) observed this process from the perspective of the psychoanalytic situation, and underlined the relatively undistorted incorporation of affect-charged events into the manifest dream.

However, referring to Schur's (1966) supplementary comments on Freud's Irma dream, we emphasize that a restricted conception of "day residue" obscures any links there might be with events lying somewhat further in the past. Freud's own associations to the Irma dream soon led him back to the covert criticism made by his friend Otto, who the previous evening had informed him of Irma's not altogether satisfactory condition. Freud did not mention, in *The Interpretation of Dreams,* the extremely critical situation with regard to the patient Emma a few months after she had been operated on by his friend Fliess. For Freud, the day residue stands at the intersection of two associative lines, one of which leads to the infantile wish, the other to the present wish: "From every element in a dream's content associative threads branch out in two or more directions" (1901a, p. 648). If we free ourselves from the dichotomy of current and infantile wish sources and adopt instead the concept of the associative network according to which past and present become entwined in many temporal stratifications (Palombo 1973), we gain access to the thesis that the main function of dreaming is the development, maintenance (regulation) and, when necessary, the restoration of psychic processes, structures, and organization (Fosshage 1983, p. 657).

We know very little about whether the control of these assimilative and adaptive processes in the psychic *milieu interne* always requires recourse to infantile, repressed wishes, or whether this is necessary only in selected cases, i.e., when a recent conflict begins to resonate with an unsolved infantile conflict situation. Speculative, but nevertheless highly interesting, is Koukkou and Lehmann's (1980, 1983) neurophysiological thesis that the variation in EEG patterns in the REM phases strongly suggests that the doorway to early memories might be open several times each night, in which case exchange processes between present and past may well take place.

Freud's idea that the infantile wish is the motor of dream formation has not been confirmed, and in light of the findings of modern research must be rejected as superfluous. He formulated this hypothesis before it became known that dreaming is a biologically based activity that is controlled by an internal

clock and needs no foundation in the psychic economy. We must ask which of the dreams recalled and recorded by means of the REM technique in dream research would actually be remembered in psychoanalysis, and which would have fulfilled their psychological function by being dreamed and *not* remembered. Nevertheless, it is clinically relevant which dreams are remembered and to whom they are told. The communicative function of dreaming (Kanzer 1955) remains a purely psychological-psychoanalytic question which has a different relevance for each of the three areas which are considered important: problem solving, information processing, and ego consolidation. These perspectives are not mutually exclusive, as Dallet (1973) rightly pointed out, and the empirical support for them differs greatly. As we saw above in the discussion of dream thinking (Sect. 5.2), over the years the hypothesis that the function of dreaming is mainly to help deal with reality has lost ground to the view that it is important for the dreamer's intrapsychic equilibrium and for the maintenance of his psychic functions. We will now present some of the important contributions to the development of the theory of dreams.

5.3.1 Wish Fulfillment Theory: A Unifying Principle of Explanation

Freud clearly felt it important to have a uniform principle of explanation and to stick to it, despite all the theoretical and practical difficulties he encountered, which we will elaborate on below. He sought to solve these difficulties by equipping the wish, in its capacity as the motive force of dream genesis, with theoretical powers comprising many elements from various sources. Freud preferred this move toward uniformity to other approaches as early as 1905, though without providing a convincing justification.

> I argued in my book, *The Interpretation of Dreams (* 1900a), that every dream is a wish which is represented as fulfilled, that the representation acts as a disguise if the wish is a repressed one, belonging to the unconscious, and that except in the case of children's dreams only an unconscious wish or one which reaches down into the unconscious has the force necessary for the formation of a dream. I fancy my theory would have been more certain of general acceptance if I had contented myself with maintaining that every dream had a meaning, which could be discovered by means of a certain process of interpretation; and that when the interpretation had been completed the dream could be replaced by thoughts which would fall into place at an easily recognizable point in the waking mental life of the dreamer. I might then have gone on to say that the meaning of a dream turned out to be of as many different sorts as the processes of waking thought; that in one case it would be a fulfilled wish, an another a realized fear, or again a reflection persisting on into sleep, or an intention (as in the instance of Dora's dream), or a piece of creative thought during sleep, and so on. Such a theory would no doubt have proved attractive from its very simplicity, and it might have been supported by a great many examples of dreams that had been satisfactorily interpreted, as for instance by the one which has been analyzed in these pages.
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> But instead of this I formulated a generalization according to which the meaning of dreams is limited to a

single form, to the representation of *wishes,* and by so doing I aroused a universal inclination to dissent. I must, however, observe that I did not consider it either my right or my duty to simplify a psychological process so as to make it more acceptable to my readers, when my researches had shown me that it presented a complication which could not be reduced to uniformity until the inquiry had been carried into another field. It is therefore of special importance to me to show that apparent exceptions — such as this dream of Dora's, which has shown itself in the first instance to be the continuation into sleep of an intention formed during the day nevertheless lend fresh support to the rule which is in dispute. (Freud 1905 e, pp. 67-68)

In order to be able to adhere to the uniform principle of explanation, Freud had to undertake great theoretical and conceptual efforts, which we will now briefly summarize. The genesis, nature, and function of the dream are founded in the attempt to eliminate psychic stimuli by means of hallucinatory gratification (Freud 1916/17, p. 136). One component of this teleological functional theory is the thesis that the dream, or the dream compromise, is the guardian of sleep, helping to fulfill the desire to remain in the sleeping state (Freud 1933 a, p. 19).

Expansion of the concepts of wish and gratification allowed even those dreams which appeared to contradict wish fulfillment theory — so-called punishment dreams — to be integrated into it. The understanding of the dream as a compromise between various tendencies made it possible for the essential motivation for the form taken by the manifest dream to be attributed sometimes to the wish for sleep, and sometimes to the need for self-punishment, interpreted as a wish and located in the superego.

It was also possible to incorporate into the traditional teleological functional theory the fact that people sometimes wake up during anxiety dreams. This was accomplished by means of the supplementary hypothesis that in nightmares, the guardian of sleep reverses its normal role and interrupts the sleep to stop the dream from becoming even more frightening. Many attempts to mitigate the anxiety can then theoretically be accommodated around this emergency function, e.g., the sleeper's simultaneous awareness that "it's only a dream." This interpretation of anxiety dreams is based on the hypothesis of protection against stimuli, and more broadly on Freud's economic hypothesis, which is of course also embodied in the idea that the dream constitutes an attempt to eliminate psychic stimuli by means of hallucinatory gratification.

The contradictions and inconsistancies in the explanations of dreaming based on wish fulfillment theory cannot simply be eliminated. The fact that Freud nonetheless always considered the wish to be the motive force in dreaming is presumably connected with *psychoanalytic heuristics.* In Sect. 3.1 we have

emphasized that there were good reasons for the fact that psychoanalytic heuristics is oriented on the pleasure principle, i.e., on the dynamic of unconscious desires (see also Sects. 8.2 and 10.2). It is important, however, to distinguish between the *discovery* of unconscious desires, that the psychoanalytic method can disclose, and the *explanation* of dreaming and dream work as the expression of desires (see Sect. 10.2). Wishes and longings will influence human life day and night even after metapsychology and its fundamental principle (drive economy) are dead, that is, can no longer be viewed as the foundation of wish fulfillment theory.

5.3.2 Self-Representation and Problem Solving

We now want to deal with the reasons why, with regard to ego formation, so much more emphasis was placed on wish theory than on the significance of identification, which can also be recognized in many dreams. Already in Freud's *Project for a Scientific Psychology* (1950a), we find the noteworthy sentence: "The aim and end of all thought processes is thus to bring about a *state of identity" (p.* 332). In some ways, this idea in this context addresses for the first time a problem that goes far beyond the realm of dream language and was later discussed in connection with Romain Rolland's "oceanic feeling" of man's community with space (see Freud 1930a, pp. 64-66).

> Let us suppose that the object which furnishes the perception resembles the subject a fellow human-being. If so, the theoretical interest [taken in it] is also explained by the fact that an object *like this* was simultaneously the [subject's] first satisfying object and further his first hostile object, as well as his sole helping power. For this reason it is in relation to a fellow human-being that a human-being learns to cognize. Then the perceptual complexes proceeding from this fellow human-being will in part be new and non-comparable his features, for instance, in the visual sphere; but other visual perceptions — e.g. those of the movements of his hands — will coincide in the subject with memories of quite similar visual impressions of his own, of his own body, [memories] which are associated with memories of movements experienced by himself. Other perceptions of the object too — if, for instance, he screams — will awaken the memory of his own experiences of pain. (Freud 1950a, p. 331)

We refer back to this passage from the *Project for a Scientific Psychology* because here visual and motor perception of one's self and the other are linked with gratification through the object. In the wish fulfillment theory of dreams, gratification has become separated from the cognitive visual processes. Since we would like to stress the major and long underestimated importance of these processes for an empirically founded self psychology, this passage, which gives Freud a place in the genealogy of symbolic interactionism, is particularly opportune. Consider Cooley's neat rhyme: "Each to each a looking-glass

reflects the other that doth pass" (1964 [1902], p. 184). We will deal with the consequences of incorporating these processes into the theory and practice of dream interpretation in the following, but can say already that doing so relativizes wish fulfillment theory without robbing it of its heuristic and therapeutic significance. Wish fulfillment theory had to be furnished with more and more supplementary hypotheses, diminishing rather than increasing the importance of the wish in the sense of instinctual wish; in addition, there was the problem of the theory's power to explain the polymorphic phenomenology of dreaming (Siebenthal 1953; Snyder 1970).

In contrast to wish fulfillment theory, whose inner contradictions led him to make repeated additions and amendments, Freud never had to revise his statement in *The Interpretation of Dreams:* "It is my experience, and one to which I have found no exception, that every dream deals with the dreamer himself" (1900a, p. 322). We would like to quote fully his elaboration of this statement, which was repeated almost word for word in his later work:

> Dreams are completely egoistic. Whenever my own ego does not appear in the content of the dream, but only some extraneous person, I may safely assume that my own ego lies concealed, by identification, behind this other person; I can insert my ego into the context. On other occasions, when my own ego *does* appear in the dream, the situation in which it occurs may teach me that some other person lies concealed, by identification, behind my ego. In that case the dream should warn me to transfer on to myself, when I am interpreting the dream, the concealed common element attached to this other person. There are also dreams in which my ego appears along with other people who, when the identification is resolved, are revealed once again as my ego. These identifications should then make it possible for me to bring into contact with my ego certain ideas whose acceptance has been forbidden by the censorship. Thus my ego may be represented in a dream several times over, now directly and now through identification with extraneous persons. By means of a number of such identifications it becomes possible to condense an extraordinary amount of thought-material. The fact that the dreamer's own ego appears several times, or in several forms, in a dream is at bottom no more remarkable than that the ego should be contained in a conscious thought several times or in different places or connections e.g. in the sentence "when I think what a healthy child I was". (1900a, pp. 322-323)

In a footnote, Freud gives a rule to follow when in doubt regarding which of the figures appearing in the dream conceals the ego: "the person who in the dream feels an emotion which I myself experience in my sleep is the one who conceals my ego."

In Freud's later observations that the figure who plays the leading role in the dream is always oneself (1916/17, p. 142; 1917d, p_223), this fact is again attributed to the narcissism of the sleeping state and to the loss of interest in the entire external world, narcissism here being equated with egoism. Incidentally, it is also possible to establish a link to wish fulfillment theory, since self-representation

always includes wishes. Thus the dreamer always has unfulfilled wishes, be they ungratified instinctual needs or products of man's unique creative fantasy.

The narcissism of the sleeping state and the regressive form of thinking in dreams may correspond to a loss of interest in the external world if "interest" and "external world" are understood in the way that the distinction between subject and object seems to decree; we believe, however, that the interest is linked with the external world in a deeper sense, eliminating the subject-object, I-you differentiation in order to achieve identity via identifications. Rereading the passage quoted above particularly attentively, it becomes even clearer that Freud is talking about *self-representation* through *identification,* i.e., about the establishment of commonality. However, the dreamer is egoistic inasmuch as he can give his thoughts and wishes free rein, without any regard for the animate or inanimate object referred to (the same goes for daydreams). From the developmental standpoint, the fact that self-representation in dreams can make use of the other persons and of animals and inanimate objects can be attributed to the primary lack of separation. This is the origin of the magic of thoughts, as well as that of gestures and actions.

To date, psychoanalysis has accorded greater therapeutic and theoretical significance to wish fulfillment via the object and to the role of the object relationship in dreams than to Freud's basic thesis that the dreamer always dreams about himself (often represented by others). In addition to the factors already mentioned, we believe that other reasons for this can be found in the history of psychoanalysis. Wish fulfillment theory, together with the instinct theories which substantiate it, served to distinguish psychoanalysis from Jung's theory of dreams. Jung first introduced the self as the subjective element, contrasting his "constructive" understanding to the reductive analytical one. Later he expanded his "constructive method" considerably, altering his terminology somewhat in the process:

> I call every interpretation which equates the dream images with real objects an interpretation on the objective level. In contrast to this is the interpretation which refers every part of the dream and all the actors in it back to the dreamer himself. This I call interpretation on the subjective level. Interpretation on the objective level is analytic, because it breaks down the dream content into complexes of memory that refer to external situations. Interpretation on the subjective level is synthetic, because it detaches the underlying complexes of memory from their external causes, regards them as tendencies or components of the subject, and reunites them with that subject. (In any experience I experience not merely the object but first and foremost myself, provided of course that I render myself an account of the experience.) In this case, therefore, all the contents of the dream are treated as symbols for subjective contents.
>
> Thus the synthetic or constructive process of interpretation is interpretation on the subjective level. (Jung 1972 [1912], p. 83)

The use of the subject level becomes Jung's most important heuristic principle, and he states that the relationships initially understood as being at the object level should also be raised to the subject level (1972 [1912], pp. 94-95). At the same time, the subject level disregards not only the personal ego and the representation of subjective attributes through other figures in the dream, but also the biographical background of such representations. Everything personal is embedded in archetypes, the interpretation of which also gives the objects a deeper meaning. Other figures in the dream are viewed not as substitutes for the dreamer's own ego, but as exponents of archetypal patterns, i.e., schemata which govern life and determine the form taken by intrapersonal affective cognitive processes as well as interpersonal experience and action. In Jung's image of man, the life cycle is understood as an assimilation of unconscious archetypal images. At the center of this assimilation is the self:

> The beginnings of our whole psychic life seem to be inextricably rooted in this point [the self], and all our highest and ultimate purposes seem to be striving towards it …. I hope it has become sufficiently clear to the attentive reader that the self has as much to do with the ego as the sun with the earth. (Jung 1972 119-281, p. 236)

Jung's theory of archetypes and Freud's theory of symbols meet at the point where Freud assumes the existence of general supraindividual structures of meaning. Since the configuration of these structures depends on individual and socioculturally imparted experience, the Freudian psychoanalytic interpretation of dreams cannot look on self-representations as manifestations of archetypal contents. Some analysts, though, are of the opinion that self-images do have archaic contents, and this can be illustrated using the example of Kohut's perception of the self-state dream.

In addition to the normal, well-known type of dream, whose latent contents (such as instinctual wishes, conflicts, and attempts to solve problems) can, in principle, be verbalized, Kohut believes he has discovered a second type, which he calls the "self-state dream." With these dreams, free association leads not to deeper understanding, but at best to images which remain on the same level as the manifest content of the dream. Investigation of the manifest content and the associative enrichment indicates that the healthy elements of the patient react with anxiety to the unsettling changes in the state of the self, e.g., its threatened disintegration. As a whole, then, dreams of this second type are to be comprehended as plastic representations of a menacing disintegration of

Kohut explained this using the example of dreams of flying. In particular, we refer the reader to

three dreams which he first mentioned in 1971 (pp. 4, 149) and to which he drew attention again in 1977 (p. 109). Briefly, Kohut views dreams of flying as highly threatening representations of the grandiose self, the danger being the disintegration which he equates with the appearance of a psychosis. This is the source of the interpretation — which Kohut does not want confused with a supportive maneuver — according to which various events in the patient's life, including the interruption of the analysis, revive old grandiose delusions. The patient fears that they will reappear, but even his dreams clearly show that he can overcome the problem with humor (Kohut 1977, p. 109). Kohut sees in humor a kind of sublimation and conquest of narcissistic delusions of grandeur, i.e., a kind of distancing (see also French and Fromm's [1964] concept of "deanimation" as a defense and a means of facilitating problem solving).

Nothing is more natural than to see dreams of flying as self-representations and wish dreams. For people today, unlike Icarus, flying is a realistic experience. We believe that the consequences which developments in technology have for the formation of unconscious schemata should be investigated in more detail before venturing anything so definite as Kohut's statement that dreams of flying are particularly alarming representations of the grandiose self. And beyond the practical questions of treatment technique, such interpretations show what consequences theoretical assumptions can have if they are taken as proved. Kohut requires no associations to interpret these dreams, because they are allegedly at an archaic level of function. However, we regard this — like the general question of the interpretation of symbols — as an unclarified problem in the psychoanalytic theory of the interpretation of dreams.

Lüders (1982) distinguishes between self dreams and object relationship dreams, but seems to accept that dreams featuring interacting figures can also be interpreted from the point of view of the self. He emphasizes that dreams are interpretations, though without the regulation and the control which in waking consciousness both indicate and betray the activity of the ego. In his view it is the contradiction between the self-concept and the real self, the imagined and the actual capacity to act, which determines the shape that dreams take. Either the self-concept has been modified without this affecting the real self, or the actual capacity to act has undergone an unsymbolized modification. The changes which have expanded or restricted the capacity to act can be positive or negative; in either case the dreamer learns, through the interpretation, what condition his real self is in and what potential he has for recognition

and action at the time of the dream, how he really feels, and what sort of mood he is in. Whether the dreams are of flying or falling, dying or being born, about the dreamer's mother or the analyst, each dream individually translates the unperceived, unsymbolized alteration in the dreamer's capacity to act, and every interpretation of a dream clarifies and differentiates the self-image he has constructed.

With this conception of the self aspect of dreams, Lüders underlines their problem-solving function, seeing each manifest dream as an interpretation of the dreamer's unconscious state of mind and assigning central importance to the integrative function of the analyst's interpretation (as French [1952, p. 71] had done; see also French and Fromm [1964]). We also particularly share Lüders' categorical opinion that "every scene and person is a metaphor which illustrates the invisible and unarticulated dynamic and whose meaning can only be ascertained with the help of the dreamer's associations and memories. The language of the dream is private, not universal" (1982, p. 828).

Since Freud, an increasing number of functions have been ascribed to dreaming, that is to say, wish fulfillment theory has been enriched. One important extension of Freud's theory is French's (1952) suggestion that dreams should be viewed as attempts at problem solving and that consideration be given not only to the wish itself but also to the obstacles standing in the way of the wish, of its fulfillment, and of conscious awareness of it. In their further elaboration of this idea, French and Fromm (1964) see two major differences between Freud's theory of dreams and their own. The first is Freud's one-sided theoretical interest in the infantile wish, which he sees as the essential motor of the dream work. The second lies in the fact that Freud's technique of reconstructing the dream work is essentially limited to following up chains of associations. French and Fromm, in contrast, do not consider thought processes to be a chain-like succession of separate items, but rather view thinking as something which proceeds in "Gestalten" (p. 89). The "problem solving" spotlighted by French and Fromm (1964) does not remain general, as it is a personal, ubiquitous, and never-completed task for every individual. At various points French and Fromm limit the term to social adaptation, thus giving problem solving a more specific meaning with emphasis on relationship conflicts.

The relationship between a dream and an attempt at problem solving comes up in Freud's work after 1905, in the *Introductory Lectures* (1916/17, p. 222):

For it is quite correct to say that a dream can represent and be replaced by everything you have just

enumerated an intention, a warning, a reflection, a preparation, an attempt at solving a problem, and so on. But if you look properly, you will see that all this only applies to the latent dream-thoughts, which have been transformed into the dream. You learn from interpretations of dreams that people's unconscious thinking is concerned with these intentions, preparations, reflections, and so on, out of which the dream-work then makes the dreams.

Freud went on to clarify some concepts and then to ask (p. 223): "The latent dream-thoughts are the material which the dream-work transforms into the manifest dream. Why should you want to confuse the material with the activity which forms it?" In the ensuing reflections Freud underlined once more the function of the dream as wish fulfillment.

The theory of dreams was considerably influenced by philosophical speculation concerning compulsive repetition. The alternative, psychologically more plausible explanation — which Freud had contemplated for recurring anxiety dreams, and from which, in contrast to the death instinct hypothesis, useful therapeutic measures can be derived — was relegated to the sidelines. This leads us to plead even more strongly that the motivational interpretation of anxiety dreams be treated as an attempt to master difficult traumatic situations.

In practice, the introduction of the concept of the death instinct affected only those analysts who incorporated it, as a latent image of the world or of man, into the clinical theory of psychoanalysis. Most analysts followed Freud's therapeutically very fruitful and theoretically plausible alternative interpretation of recurring anxiety dreams, which regards them as a form of deferred mastering and thus, in a broad sense, as problem solving. Kafka (1979), in his overview of examination dreams, speaks of their reassuring function, and clarifies them as a transitional form between traumatic dreams and anxiety dreams.

Similarly to the way in which punishment dreams were incorporated into wish fulfillment theory by expanding the concept of the wish and localizing the wish in the superego, recurring anxiety dreams could also have been included in the expanded theory by ascribing the ego a wishlike need for mastery (Weiss and Sampson 1985). Although envisaged by Freud, this alternative was not theoretically developed, which is all the more astounding considering that it was used intuitively by many analysts and that it can be validated clinically with no great difficulty. Experience shows that if old determinants of anxiety are worked through while self-confidence (ego feeling etc.) increases, then stereotypic

recurring anxiety dreams about traumatic situations will subside. The symptoms may also improve inasmuch as they are rooted in the dreams and can be reviewed as manifestations of these specific unconscious determinants (see Kafka 1979).

Thus although Freud had not hesitated in the context of a psychological interpretation of punishment dreams to view the wish and its gratification as arising in psychic areas other than that of instinctual life, he now shied back from extending wish fulfillment theory any further. He had been able to accommodate punishment dreams in the superego without abandoning his system, but to assign a wishlike character to problem solving itself would have destroyed the system. Problem solving would then have become a paramount principle, and instinctual wishes, as parts of the integral self-representation, would have had to be subordinated to it.

What could have led Freud not to view anxiety dreams as attempts at wish fulfillment in the sense of mastering, i.e., stemming from the ego, even though he had not hesitated to attribute punishment dreams to motives in the superego? We suspect that so many problems were created by the reorganization of the dualistic theory and by the conversion of the first topography to the second, structural topography that the theory of dreams has still not been completely integrated into structural theory (Rapaport 1967) despite the attempts which have been made (Arlow and Brenner 1964). For example, on the basis of structural theory, it would have been very natural to consider the ego as having an anxiety-mastering function in dreams too, and to view the recurrences as attempts at problem solving. Freud had already given a convincing example of problem solving in a dream which he interpreted in *Fragment of an Analysis of a Case of Hysteria* (1905 e), and in very positive terms described problem solving in dreams as a continuation of waking thinking at a preconscious level (in notes to the 1914 and 1925 editions of *The Interpretation of Dreams* [1900a, p. 579 and p. 506 respectively] and in the *Introductory Lectures* [1916/17, p. 236]).

Yet Freud also remained skeptical toward attempts to ascribe a creative character to dream work (1923 a, p. 242). We attribute the fact that he nevertheless adhered to the idea of reducing the meaning of dreams to one single type of thought (namely the attempt at wish fulfillment) to a basic principle immanent in his system and rooted in his latent anthropology, i.e., his image of man and the world. We are referring to his attempt to attribute psychic phenomena, and thus the genesis, meaning, and nature of

dreams, ultimately to physiologic processes. Needs and wishes are undoubtedly closely connected with instinct in its capacity as a borderline concept between the psychic and the physiologic, which is why dreaming was considered as the discharge of internal stimuli. Freud's confirmation of his latent image of man in practice, i.e., in dream interpretation, cannot, however, be dismissed as finding the Easter eggs that he himself had hidden, or, in other words, as a confirmation of bias and presuppositions. Even if wish fulfillment theory cannot be upheld in the sense of instinct discharge, it remains a primary heuristic principle that all psychic phenomena, including dreams, be viewed as expressions of wishes and needs. An essential element is lost whenever this regulatory principle is ignored.

5.4 Self-Representation Theory and Its Consequences

We would like to summarize Freud's thesis that every dream represents the dreamer himself, and to draw some conclusions which extend his thesis. The contradictions in the psychoanalytic theory of dreams (dream work) arise from the fact that therapeutic translation (interpretation work) does not yield the meaning behind the manifest dream content without encountering resistance by the dreamer. One problem which arises in the interpretation work is that of determining the relationship between the latent dream thoughts uncovered by interpretation and the manifest dream content (i.e., between the latent and the manifest dream).

Inconsistencies arise in attempts at translation, because Freud now assumed a kind of genetic relationship, in which the thought — the later phenomenon from the point of view of developmental psychology — was subordinated to the archaic symbolic mode of expression in the shape of a simultaneously operative latent wish. The following statement is characteristic: "You will see, too, that in this way it becomes possible in regard to a large number of *abstract* thoughts to create pictures to act as substitutes for them in the manifest dream while at the same time serving the purpose of concealment" (Freud 1916/17, p. 121, emphasis added).

It is quite clear that Freud is concerned here — as indeed in all his work — with the relationship of preliminary stages to the final form, i.e., with the theme of transformation and with the problem of the divergence and development of psychic constellations. The above-mentioned contradictions are also ultimately related to the great difficulty in comprehending transformation rules and their determinants

when wish, image, and thought, or affect and perception, have been separated from each other even though they comprise a unit of experience. Think, for example, of the transformation of the wish into "hallucinatory wish fulfillment." Since a primary infantile wish was subordinated to the latent thought in the chain of events assumed by the theory, this may also be viewed as a kind of transformation problem, which might explain the contradictory statements concerning "manifest" and "latent." If one adopts the abbreviated term *latent dream* to describe the meaning of the *manifest dream* revealed by interpretation, without localizing the meaning itself to a seemingly real preliminary stage, one need not concern oneself with theoretically inadequate attempts at problem solving, but can regain an openness oriented on the special form of thinking in dreams.

We have already indicated which processes of psychological development create the basis for the appearance of the person of the dreamer in every dream. Yet questions of detail remain open if we choose the formulation that the dream is a self-representation in which the dreamer is involved at least insofar as he expresses his subjective view of a part of his world in picture language. His subjective view of himself and of the part of his life represented in the dream is — even independently of the regression — ego-oriented. The other dramatis personae, their words, and their actions are invented and staged by the playwright, at least inasmuch as they cannot effectively contradict the dream author's characterizations and settings.

The author, however, does not have complete freedom of choice concerning material and means of representation, which are in fact to a large degree predetermined by the following restrictions: As long as there are no thoughts which force themselves on us irresistibly in the waking state or in neurotic or psychotic illnesses, we feel that we are masters in our own house, with sufficient freedom of choice between various possible courses of action. Even when the scope for choice is actually very limited by external or internal factors, and when, from the motivational point of view, our freedom of will seems to dissolve into dependence, we still lay claim, at least subjectively, to the possibility of choosing to do one thing and not another. If it were otherwise, we would not be able to achieve the ideal aim of psychoanalysis, which is, by means of insight into the determinants of thought and action, to enlarge an individual's realm of freedom and his capacity for responsibility for himself and those around him, i.e., to free him from the inevitable consequences of unconscious processes. In dreams, the subjective feeling of being master in one's own house, and at least potentially free, is lost. We experience this loss particularly

strongly when we fight our way out of sleep during anxiety dreams, against which we are totally helpless, and overcome the loss of freedom by reasserting the ascendancy of the ego. The lessening of the resistance to repression, together with the processes molding dream formation (dream work) described by Freud, allows unconscious areas of psychic life to emerge which the ego would prefer not to acknowledge and against which barriers are erected. It is one of the established general principles of psychoanalysis that these unconscious strivings nevertheless produce symptoms, precisely because they return through the back door and deprive the master of the house of his power and his freedom. The relevance of this general principle for human life is controversial in some specific contexts in individual psychopathology and in the history of collectives.

From the dynamic point of view, it would seem natural to look particularly closely at what effects the lessening of repression resistance during sleep has on the dreamer's world of wishes. Since wishes are by their very nature directed at objects and strive for gratification, and since there are no limits to human imagination — i.e., it goes far beyond the immediate gratification of vital needs — frustrations inevitably emerge. In view of the basic significance of wishes, and the fact that even in paradise wish fulfillment would probably never catch up with human fantasy — to say nothing of real failures or of the incest taboo, which is probably the only taboo to transcend almost all sociocultural boundaries and have universal validity (Hall and Lindzey 1968) — it is no wonder that Freud restricted the practical therapeutic consideration of the meaning of dreams to the representation of wishes. On the one hand the world of wishes is inexhaustible, and on the other there are always restrictions, prohibitions, and taboos which prevent wishes from being fulfilled. Thus, wishes involve so many imagined or genuine mortifications, which can be nourished endlessly from the individual's surplus fantasy, that a particularly strong resistance is built up to acknowledging and consciously recognizing them. Freud therefore attributed to the dream censor a masking and encoding function which permits only the *attempt* to fulfill wishes.

There can be no wish or instinct divorced from the subject, and even where the subject does not yet experience itself with an ego feeling or sense of identity, i.e., in infancy, it is treated as a hungry entity and called by its own name. In a sense, expressing hunger by crying is the self-representation appropriate to the subject's age. The infant itself does not understand it as such, but those around it do. Although adults can gain insight into the way children experience the world, our theories of how they

see and feel things are always products of the adult mind. Because they concern the preverbal phase of developement, constructions and reconstructions of a child's internal world cannot be based on verbal information. They thus pose particular problems of scientific verification, which, however, we cannot go into more deeply here.

We mention this potential — and frequent — "confusion of tongues between adults and the child" (Ferenczi 1955 [1933]) because we now want to go into the relationship between the child's way of seeing things and adult thinking, using the example of the translation of the child's dream language into the language of waking thinking. By the way, we are still dealing with translation from one language to another even when the special form of thinking in dreams is not characterized as strongly by infantilisms and peculiarly colored memory elements as Freud assumed it to be. From time immemorial, the fact that people live in two worlds, that of normal language during the day and that of dream language at night, has been a source of uneasiness. An important aspect of the art of the dream-reader was the interpreting of the strange language and world of dreams in such a way that their content could be harmonized with the dreamer's conscious desires and intentions. During the siege of Tyre, Alexander the Great dreamed of a dancing satyr, which the dream-reader Aristandros interpreted as *sa Tyros,* "thine is Tyre" (Freud 1916/17, p. 236). It can hardly be disputed that Aristandros achieved some insight into Alexander's world of wishes, and he probably already intuitively understood something of the self-fulfilling function of prophesies. Perhaps the prophesy brought luck by strengthening Alexander's resolve!

Approaching the night side of our thinking can also be disturbing for the patient when his associations revolve around the manifest dream content, the search for meaning is left entirely to him, and his reading is left unchallenged. Even patients who are strongly motivated by curiosity or who are, on the basis of previous experience, inclined to grant that dreaming has a creative function are disturbed by the sinister nature of some dreams. It is often possible to understand this apprehensiveness in the context of resistance in one form or another, and thus to be able to offer means of overcoming it. Because it occurs so commonly and so regularly, and is by no means always confined to the initial phase of treatment, we would like to describe it using the more general term "identity resistance" (Chap. 4), that is to say, resistance rooted in the patient's adherence to his conscious image of himself and the world, i.e., to his previous identity.

Identity resistance is directed not only outward, against the opinions and influences of others — specifically the analyst — but also inward, particularly against the different representation of the self and the world in dreams. This internal aspect is what Erikson means when he speaks of identity resistance and the fear of changes in the identity feeling (1968, pp. 214-215). He described identity resistance particularly in the context of the phenomenology of identity confusion in puberty and early adulthood. The motivation for the identity resistance displayed by analysands who adhere rigidly to their conscious view of things, and thus have considerable reservations concerning the self-representation in their dreams, is quite different. It seems obvious that these two psychopathologically very different groups, which vary both in age and in symptoms, require different treatment. Plain common sense tells us we should behave differently when we want to stabilize identity distinctions which are blurred and confused than when — at the other extreme — we want to break down barriers which have become rigid and almost insurmountable. This differentiation in treatment can be substantiated theoretically.

There can be no doubt that greater therapeutic and theoretical significance has been attached to wish fulfillment via the object and to the object relationship in dreams than to Freud's basic thesis that the dreamer always represents himself, often in the guise of other figures.

The above thoughts on identity and identity resistance make it necessary for us now to consider the concept of identification in the sense of "just as." Freud (1900a, p. 320) states that a figure in a dream can be made up of parts of a number of different people, and says that this "construction of a composite person" (p. 321) cannot be differentiated clearly from identification. When construction of a composite person is not completely successful, another figure appears in the dream.

We have traced Freud's assumption (1923c, p. 120) that the dreamer's ego can appear more than once in the same dream — in person and concealed behind other figures — back to the dream language's direct conversion of common features or similarities into visual images. Instead of giving verbal expression to thoughts such as "I am similar to..." or "I wish I was like...," the dreamer portrays the person with whose beauty, strength, aggression, sexual potency, intelligence, sophistication, etc. he would like to identify. This substantively multifaceted process makes it possible for human development to take place and for the individual to learn from a model. One could say that while the gratification of instincts

ensures animal survival, identification is necessary to guarantee the ontogenesis of a person in the given sociocultural context. We thus support Freud's thesis that primary identification is a direct or original form of the association of feelings with an object, occurring earlier than any object relationship, and thus has basic constitutive significance for human development (Freud 1921 c, pp. 106-107; 1923 b, p. 31).

The effortlessness with which the dreamer distributes his own opinions, intentions, or actions between several figures is linked with the probably irreducible nature of the formal structure of this special language, a structure which resembles the composition of picture puzzles. These, by the way, were very popular in 19th-century Vienna, which may explain why Freud chose them as a metaphor for the structure of dreams — a metaphor of which even Wittgenstein approved in spite of his general hostility to psychoanalysis.

It seems a natural step to describe representation of the dreamer by another person as projection, but the depth of self-representation through others would be limited if it were to be attributed to projection in general and defense in particular. Nevertheless, it is not uncommon for dreamers to have trouble recognizing themselves in others, or to see the mote in another's eye without noticing the beam in their own. The primitive level of psychological development to which dreamers can regress enables subject and objects to be inter changed. The differentiation of ego and not ego, of subject and object, is not yet complete in this phase (and is fortunately never absolute, even in the healthy adult, otherwise there would be no such thing as mutual and shared happiness, let alone the "oceanic feeling"; see Thomä 1981, pp. 99-100).

In this context we would like to refer again to the painstaking investigations by Foulkes (1982), which showed that the dream reports of 3- to 4-year-old children describe actions carried out by other people. At the dream level, children of this age thus live principally from identification, not from projection.

In contrast to his faithfulness to the assumption that the function of dreaming is the representation of wishes, Freud later (1923 c, pp. 120-121) repudiated as speculation the proposition that *all* figures appearing in dreams are fragmentations or representations of the dreamer's own ego. But who had upheld this proposition? It is our view that Freud's criticism might have been directed against Jung's

interpretation at the subjective level. Alternatively, it is conceivable that this opinion was held by other psychotherapists or that it had just emerged within psychoanalysis. Finally, it is possible that Freud wanted to warn in advance against regarding this point of view as absolute. Consistently throughout his whole work, he adheres to the view that the dreamer can appear more than once in a dream and be concealed behind others. An absolutist conception would have breached the all-embracing heuristic principle of finding the infantile root of the motivating dream wish whenever possible.

An absolutist theory of self-representation would thus have come to rival wish fulfillment theory as the primary concept of psychoanalytic dream interpretation. In fact, though, practical therapeutic dream interpretation was as far from realizing this at the beginning of the 1920s as it had been when Freud wrote *The Interpretation of Dreams,* in which all those factors were already covered which had also proven their worth in the understanding of Dora's dreams. In other words, in the process of looking for latent wishes, including *the* infantile dream wish, other aspects of dreams and their meaning were constantly being discovered, including the problem-solving and conflict-mastering functions. There was always a great variety of approaches to dream interpretation, but never any tendency to replace wish fulfillment theory with an equally comprehensive theory of self-representation.

It is important not to forget Freud's view that it is the regression in sleep that makes it possible for the dreamer to represent himself through several dream figures. This facilitates the cross-border traffic between "I" and "you," between subject and object, and makes them interchangeable in the sense of reciprocal identification in the dream drama. The emergence of magic wishes allows objects in dreams, as in fairy tales, to be transformed ad libitum. Being and having, identification and wishes, are no longer opposites but two aspects of the dream process.

In view of all this, it seems natural to seek the target of Freud's criticism outside the Freudian schools of psychoanalysis and to find it in Jung's interpretation of dreams at the subjective level. Even if we should be mistaken in this assumption, we hope at least that our error is productive for the pursual of our topic. For historical and practical reasons, any discussion of self-representation in dreams must include both interpretation at the subjective level, which is intimately related to Jung's self concept, and Kohut's narcissistic, self psychological interpretation.

5.5 Technique

With the conception of the dream as a means of self-representation, we would like to pave the way for an expanded understanding of dreaming which will lead us out of the irresolvable contradiction inherent in wish theory. In latent dream thoughts and wishes we see unconscious self elements which have a considerable share in the conflict and which also contain a description of the problem, perhaps even an attempt at problem solving in the dream. We also see the dreamer's ideas about himself, his body, his behavior patterns, etc. The relationship between problem solving in the present and that earlier in the life history not only reveals repressed wishes and conflicts, but also displays rehearsals of future actions. When the dream is understood as self-representation in all its conceivable aspects, the analyst will be receptive to what is most important to the dreamer and will measure the success of his interpretations not only by how much they contribute to the understanding of how the patient currently functions, but also, and most importantly, by how far they help the patient to attain new and better ways of seeing things and to produce improved patterns of behavior. Vitally important though the dreamer's past is, with all its obstacles to his development, his life takes place in the here-and-now and is oriented toward the future. Dream interpretation can contribute considerably to altering an individual's present and future.

Before we turn to dream interpretation in the stricter sense, we would like to raise a few questions relating to the remembering of dreams and to the patient's dream reports. The therapeutic usefulness of dreams is not, however, restricted solely to their interpretation with the aid of associations, i.e., the revelation of the latent dream thought. Monchaux (1978) regarded the function of dreaming and the reporting of dreams (in the sense of unconscious wish and defense in the transference relationship) as just as important for the dreamer as the actual dream itself.

Let us begin with a practical question: Should we encourage patients to write out their dreams, for instance directly upon waking? Freud (1911 e) came out clearly against this proposal, in the belief that dreams are not forgotten when the basic unconscious content becomes capable of being worked on. Abraham (1953 [1913]) shared this view, supporting it with an at times amusing case history. Slap (1976) reports briefly how he requested a patient to record in writing a part of one dream which she found very difficult to describe orally, and relates that this course of action helped in understanding the

dream.

The fact (which has sometimes been critically noted) that a patient's dream reports bear or acquire a distinct resemblance to his analyst's theoretical orientation is not evidence for the analyst's theory, but for the fact that patient and analyst influence each other. No one should be astonished if the two parties are brought closer together by the reporting, common exploration, and eventual comprehension of dreams. The productivity of a patient with regard to his dream reports is naturally also determined largely by the way in which the analyst reacts to the reports and by whether he gets the feeling that the analyst is interested in them. Thomä (1977) has shown clearly that this rapprochement is not a result of therapeutic suggestion. In order for a patient to be able to report a dream, he must feel sufficiently secure in the therapeutic relationship. Hohage and Thomä (1982) give a brief account of the interplay between the transference constellation and the patient's potential for concerning himself with dreams.

Grunert (1982, p. 206) argues against the restrictions inherent in Freud's suggestion that consideration of the manifest dream content alone, without including the dreamer's associations, may be of no use in interpretation. She writes: "Contrary to Freud's practice, the analyst should not be afraid to give serious consideration to the manifest imagery and events in the dream and the accompanying or symbolized emotions and affects." It follows that he should interpret accordingly.

5. 5.1 Freud 's Recommendations and Later Extensions

After the numerous formulations of his advice on interpretation technique scattered throughout *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900a), Freud summarized his recommendations in various publications. In *Remarks on the Theory and Practice of Dream-Interpretation* (1923c, p. 109) he wrote:

> In interpreting a dream during analysis a choice lies open to one between several technical procedures.
>
> One can (a) proceed chronologically and get the dreamer to bring up his associations to the elements of the dream in the order in which those elements occurred in his account of the dream. This is the original, classical method, which I still regard as the best if one is analysing one's own dreams.
>
> Or one can (b) start the work of interpretation from some one particular element of the dream which one picks out from the middle of it. For instance, one can choose the most striking piece of it, or the piece which shows the greatest clarity or sensory intensity; or, again, one can start off from some spoken words in the dream, in the expectation that they will lead to the recollection of some spoken words in waking life.

Or one can (c) begin by entirely disregarding the manifest content and instead ask the dreamer what events of the previous day are associated in his mind with the dream he has just described.

Finally, one can (d) if the dreamer is already familiar with the technique of interpretation, avoid giving him any instructions and leave it to him to decide with which associations to the dream he shall begin.

I cannot lay it down that one or the other of these techniques is preferable or in general yields better results.

These recommendations include all the essential elements of dream interpretation, although the analyst has a great deal of latitude concerning relative importance and sequence of application. The recommendations given 10 years later (1933a) are similar, but attach a new importance to the day residue.

The analyst now has the material with which he can work. But how? Although the literature on dreams has meanwhile grown to almost unmanageable proportions, elaborate recommendations on interpretative technique have remained rather rare.

In light of their view of dreaming as problem solving, French and Fromm list three conditions which interpretations must fulfill:

1. The various meanings of the dream must fit together.

2. They must fit the dreamer's emotional situation at the moment of dreaming.

3. It must be possible to reconstruct the thought processes in a way which is free of contradictions.

French and Fromm (1964, p. 66) describe these factors as the "cognitive structure" of the dream, constituting the decisive test of the validity of the reconstruction and thus of the interpretation. They emphasize that the ego in dreams not only has the task of solving problems, but must also avoid too great an involvement in the focal conflict, which would make problem solving more difficult. This avoidance should really be termed "distancing." One well-established means of distancing is what French and Fromm call "deanimation": a conflict with other people is de-emotionalized or technicized, to make it easier to find solutions for the problem which now has the appearance of a merely technical obstacle. "Cognitive structure of the dream" is the expression French and Fromm use to describe the "constellation

of intimately related problems" (p. 94), by which they mean the dreamer's current relationships in everyday life, that to the analyst, and the connection between the two.

Dream interpretation, in common with other forms of interpretation, must comprise three components: the transference relationship, the current external relationship, and the historical dimension. This is necessary because the problem — it is a neurotic one — apparently cannot be solved by the patient in all three of these areas. French and Fromm are very rigorous in their endeavor to come up with a recognizable, meaningful connection ("evidence") to the material from the same (and previous) sessions. Any gaps and contradictions are useful indicators that other, perhaps better hypotheses should be tested. Although they are by no means opponents of intuition, they mistrust intuitive dream interpretation since it mostly covers only one aspect of the dream and leads the analyst into the trap of the "Procrustean bed" technique (1964, p. 24), i.e., the temptation to fit the material to the hypothesis, and not vice versa. The consideration of isolated aspects is in their view the most common reason for differences of opinion in dream interpretation. Their call for the analysis of several dreams in order to achieve historical interpretations (p. 195) is interesting. Other authors have also urged investigation of series of dreams (e.g., Greenberg and Pearlman 1975; Cohen 1976; Greene 1979; Geist and Kächele 1979).

To ensure complete clarity we would like to list again the requirements which French and Fromm believe dream interpretation should fulfill:

1. The various meanings of a dream must fit together.

2. They must fit the dreamer's emotional situation "at the moment of dreaming."

3. Beware of taking a part for the whole.

4. Beware of the Procrustean bed technique.

5. Two steps: a) current problem b) similar historical problem (remember the transference aspect).

6. Testability: reconstruction of the cognitive structure of the dream, contradictions as important indicators for new ideas (analogy: puzzles).

7. Several dreams are necessary for historical interpretations.

Lowy (1967) draws attention to one restriction on interpretation activity: he does not interpret aspects which would be helpful and supportive for the dreamer. This corresponds roughly to the technique of not interpreting mild, positive transference before it turns into resistance. He warns urgently against making over-hasty interpretations: "the suppressing capacity of unconsidered interpretations is real, and this may result in depriving the subject of needed explicit experiencing of certain self-created figures and scenes" (p. 524).

A frequent subject of discussion is symbol interpretation, which occupies a special position because of the general validity of symbols. However, this position is relativized by Holt's illuminating definition of symbols as a special form of displacement. According to him, symbols are to be treated as displacements of another kind:

> I propose, therefore, that we consider symbolism a special case of displacement, with the following characteristics: a symbol is a socially shared and structuralized displacement-substitute. The first characteristic, its being used by a large number of people, implies the second one and helps explain it: if any particular displacement-substitute were a purely *ad hoc*, transitory phenomenon, one would indeed have to assume some kind of "racial unconscious" or other type of pre-established harmony to account for the fact that many people arrive at the same displacement. (Holt 1967, p. 358)

Associations are the prerequisite and the basis for the analyst's interpretations. They are the bricks which he employs to build his understanding of the dream and of the problem and to construct his alternative solutions for the dreamer, and which constitute an important part of what is termed the "context" of the dream. Sand (in an unpublished manuscript entitled "A Systematic Error in the Use of Free Association," 1984) has discussed the significance of the "context" from the scientific point of view. Reis (1970) investigated the forms taken by free association regarding dreams and used an actual case to illustrate the specific problem that patients are sometimes unable to associate to dreams in particular.

Freud (1916/17, pp. 116-117) postulates a quantitative relationship between resistance and the requirement for associations necessary to understand a dream element:

> Sometimes it requires only a single response, or no more than a few, to lead us from a dreamelement to the unconscious material behind it, while on other occasions long chains of associations and the overcoming of many critical objections are required for bringing this about. We shall conclude that these differences relate to the changing magnitude of the resistance, and we shall probably turn out to be right. If the resistance is small, the substitute cannot be far distant from the unconscious material; but a greater resistance means that the unconscious material will be greatly distorted and that the path will be a long one from the substitute back to the unconscious material.

It is in the field of dream interpretations that the technique of free association was particularly consolidated and refined (see Sect. 7.2). At the same time, the technique obtained its theoretical foundation from the assumed inverse symmetry between the dream work and the genesis of free associations. Thus, Freud (1900a, p. 102) defines free association as "involuntary ideas." The dream is perceived as the product of a regressive process through which the dream thought is transformed into a visual image.

Freud assumed that a patient who free-associates on the couch is in a regression similar to that of the dreamer. The patient is thus in a particularly favorable position to describe the dream images and also interpret them. Through the process of association, one by one the components of the dream become intelligible in the waking state; that is, the patient is in the position to dismantle that which was assembled in the dream (Freud 1901 a, pp. 636-642).

Since the method of free association can today no longer be regarded as a simple inversion of dream work, it is advisable to adopt a pragmatic attitude to free association and not to overlook the meaningful role which the analyst plays merely by actively listening — in creating the connections he interprets. We have already shown clearly, using the example of Kohut's dream interpretations, how much influence theoretical assumptions can exert.

We use the expression "theme-centered association" to describe the associations which the dreamer, prompted by the analyst, has concerning the individual elements of the dream; these are the associations which characterize classical dream interpretation. Although theme-centered association is still employed occasionally, with positive consequences for the interpretative work, the literature contains few such analyses of dreams. We are not ashamed to be old-fashioned in this respect, and do not believe that the patient's freedom is restricted by the focused dream interpretation derived from theme-centered association. Naturally, in theme-centered association too, the question soon arises as to which of the patient's associations are still connected with the manifest dream, and, most importantly, which are linked with his latent thoughts and his specific unconscious wishes. However, the association resistance, albeit circumscribed, gives some indication of the path to pursue in the context of the dream.

At this juncture we would like to mention just one further point, namely that the technique of

dream interpretation described by Freud as "classical" (1923c, p. 109; see above) has almost fallen into oblivion. Kris does not give a single example of this technique. He has a comprehensive understanding of the method and the process of free association: it is a common process whereby the dreamer attempts to express all his thoughts and feelings in words, and the analyst, prompted by his own associations, helps him to fulfill this task (Kris 1982, pp. 3, 22).

The patient's ability to associate freely, or more freely, can be regarded as an expression of inner freedom, and thus as a desirable goal of treatment. However, it is not the analyst's own associations, or his evenly suspended attention as such, which help the patient to open up; the essential factor is how the analyst arrives at useful interpretations and what effect these have on the patient. Directly after every intervention — every interruption of the patient's flow of words — the session becomes centered on this one theme. Even total absence of response to an interpretation is a reaction which the analyst will note. The analyst's evenly suspended attention then operates in a theme-centered fashion to the same degree as the patient centers on one theme, i.e., reacts to his interventions rather than ignores them. How the analyst derives his interpretations from the patient's associations, how he finds the right words — in a nutshell, psychoanalytic heuristics — is not the subject of this section (see Chap. 8). The more varied the patient's associations are, and the more he goes into detail, the more difficulty the analyst has in making his selection and also in justifying it on the basis of patterns or configuration in the material. It is therefore expedient on the one hand to consider what the patient is saying from the point of view of continuity — which of the last session's themes is being continued today? — and on the other hand to regard the current session as a unit — which problem is the patient trying to solve?

Spence (1981) proposes dividing associations into "primary" and "secondary" in order to arrive at the "transformation rules" he wants to establish. The basis for the use of association is the "correspondence postulate" which we mentioned above (Spence 1981, p. 387): the associations correspond to the dream thoughts because the regression during association corresponds to the state of "benign regression" during sleep or when in love. Primary associations are those which are causally linked to the dream; they lead to the details of the dream. Secondary associations are those prompted by the dream itself; they lead away from the dream. Because of the significance of this differentiation, and in order to show his argument more clearly, we would like to quote Spence at some length:

1. We must partition the dreamer's associations into a primary set (the presumed causes of the dream) and a secondary set (triggered by the dream as dreamt but having no significant relationship to the creation of the dream). The primary associations should all come from about the same time period in the patient's life as a working hypothesis, let us take the twenty-four hours preceding the dream. The more restricted this time period, the more confidence we can have that we have identified truly primary associations. If, on the other hand, we significantly increase the size of our search space (to include, for example, the patient's total life), we thereby reduce the chances of finding anything significantly related to the *cause* of the dream and increase the chances of capturing only secondary associations.

2. We need to rewrite the primary associations as a minimum set of propositions. The purpose of this step is to represent each association in some standard canonical form, making it easier for us to discover the underlying similarity of the set and paving the way for a discovery of the rules of transformation.

3. We have to reduce the causative propositions to a restricted set of one or more transformation rules. Each rule (or rules), applied to the canonical proposition, should generate one or more of the details of the actual dream; the complete set of rules, together with the full set of propositions, should account for *all* details in the dream. Thus, at the end of this procedure, we will have reduced the manifest dream to (a) a set of underlying propositions, and (b) a set of one or more transforming rules. The transforming rules might share some of the same primary-process mechanisms. (1981, p. 391)

Spence's essential concern is to reduce the multiplicity of meanings which led Specht (1981) to ask how interpretation of dreams differs first from astrology and the interpretation of oracles, and second from the schematic interpretation of symbols on which popular books on dream interpretation are based. Let us address first the criticism of arbitrariness, which appears to receive support even from within our own ranks. Waelder (1936), discussing theories of neurosis, writes:

If one were to unearth such possible theories - theories which view the neurosis as the simultaneous solution of three or more problems — and in addition to consider the possibility of subordinating one problem to the other, the number of such theories of the neurosis would reach many tens of thousands. (1936, p. 55)

A little later, he continues:

Finally, we may look for the operation of this principle even in dream life; the dream is the sphere wherein over-determination was originally discovered. Nevertheless, the general character of dreams remains the reduction of the psychic experience as well in relation to its content (receding of the superego and of the active problems of the ego) as in relation to the way of working (substitution of the manner of working of the unconscious for the manner of working of the conscious in *attempted solutions)* and finally in the chronological sense (receding of the actual in favor of the past). In consideration of all these reduction or regression developments which mean a change in the problems and a reversion in the specific methods of solution from the manner of working of the conscious to the manner of working of the unconscious, the dream phenomena can also be explained through the principle of multiple function. Every occurrence in the dream appears then likewise in eightfold function or clearly in eight groups of meaning. The distinction of the dream is characterized only through the change or the shifting of the problems and through the relapse in the manner of working. (1936, pp. 58-59, emphasis added)

Implicit in this is that if several factors are taken into account, the number of possible interpretations of a dream runs, as a matter of principle, into the "tens of thousands." The dream is thus a "concentration" of many different endeavors and has an infinite number of potential meanings. According to Specht (1981), however, the possible tentative interpretations of a dream are not unlimited. Specht formulates and tests a theory of dream interpretation, referring to the "indistinct horizon" of psychoanalytic concepts and interpretation rules (p. 776). He proposes, in conformity with similar problems of scientific theory, that "dream interpretations should also be comprehended as recommendations and not as descriptive statements" (p. 783). He proposes understanding the dream in the sense of the assumed wish, even if the dreamer is not aware of the wish. Specht defines a wish as "a tendency, founded in the concrete life situation, which the dreamer has not yet been able to accept" (p. 784). He works with the concept of "antecedent constellation" (p. 765), by which he means "the psychic situation preceding the dream." Following Roland (1971), he emphasizes — like Sand (see above) but independently — the decisive importance of the "relevant context." Both concepts — rightly, we believe — leave the temporal dimension entirely open, so that both the day residue and traumas occurring decades earlier can be included. Specht comes to the conclusion that the possibilities for dream interpretation are limited by (I) the rules of interpretation, (2) the dreamer's free associations, and (3) the number of wishes which are anchored in the antecedent constellation and which are prevented (by countermotives, which remain to be specified) from attaining the level of conscious awareness. If in the majority of the dreams no correspondence can be determined between the possible tentative interpretations for a dream and the wishes anchored in the antecedent constellation, Specht would reject the theory as false. "The theory of dreams is thus in principle falsifiable, in sharp contrast to the interpretation of oracles" (p. 775).

He lays down the following criteria for scientific dream interpretation:

1. Description of the antecedent constellation

2. Application of the rules of interpretation

3. Reporting of the patient's free associations

4. Description of the countermotives (with psychogenesis?)

5. Consideration of various dream wishes

6. Justification of the choice of the "right" interpretation

7. Elaboration into interpretations

8. Their effect (taking account of the criteria for the "right interpretation" — among others, the emergence of new material)

In disputes over scientific theory, we should not allow ourselves to forget that dream interpretation has a practical origin in the patient's wish for such interpretation (Bartels 1979): he wants to close the breach between his dreams and his conscious life, in order to preserve his identity, as Erikson (1954) pointed out in his interpretation of "the dream specimen of psychoanalysis" — Freud's Irma dream.