

Dreams Packet: Gateway to the Unconscious?



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"The Nightmare" (1781)

A History of Dreaming...

Throughout generations, cultures, and the whole of history, people have recognized and recorded dreams, but it's safe to assume our contemporary dreams differ substantially from those of our ancestors. For example, our waking distractions and concerns or anxieties are quite different from our forebears (ie. we generally do not concern ourselves with being mauled by various creatures). Fundamental human experiences, however, transcend time, such as pleasure/pain, communicating, loving, fighting, giving birth, being chased, falling, feeling surprise, excitement, or disappointment, etc. These same experiences have occurred in humankind for thousands of years, and among these universals are the archetypes - profound images which Carl Jung perceived as common to the whole of humanity and residing in what he termed 'the collective unconscious.'

All the way back to ancient Jewish tradition and to earlier civilizations and cultures, the life-circumstances of the dreamer were thought just as important to the interpretation of the dream as the dream content itself; this view is still largely held by contemporary psychologists, too. Ancient Egyptian dream symbol analysis is equivalent to modern-day dream dictionaries. Dreams were believed to carry messages in the ancient world, and those messages were either indications of what's to come in the future, or instructions handed down from the deities. The ancient Greek philosopher Plato (c. 428 - 347 B.C.) connected dreams to the "lawless wild beast that peers out in sleep," which was a precursor to what Freud termed "leakages from the unconscious" some 2,000 years later. Similarly, the ancient Greek philosopher and Plato pupil Aristotle (c. 384 - 322 B.C.) claimed dreams come from bodily sensations, which is a similar interpretation to modern scientific rational thought. Plato saw the liver as the origin of dreams while today we talk about the brain...

For both Eastern and Western philosophies, dream beliefs were originally tied to religion - just as was all science. It wasn't until the 15th Century that the printing press came around, thus the boom of dream dictionaries which made dream interpretation and dream theory a common practice, rather than kept only in the hands of holy priests, prophets, and priestesses. Dreams have thus played a serious role in art and literature, especially from the invention of that very same printing press. While thinkers of the 18th Century Enlightenment may have dismissed dreams as reason's enemy, the thinkers, writers, painters, and yes, dreamers of Romanticism perceived dreams as windows into the soul, a concept which has continued up through our contemporary time.



S. Freud (1856 - 1939) ~ Wish-Fulfillment

One of history's most influential psychologists, Freud saw human phenomena - including dreams - as subject to cause and effect. He perceived dreams as springing directly from the unconscious mind.

Freud developed the technique of free association in working with his patients; with this technique, patients articulate sequences of random/spontaneous connections through discussing dreams. This approach was successful in Freud's mind in that it helped him uncover past traumas, repressed desires, formative memories, etc. from the unconscious, which had been buried by the conscious mind. Freud saw dreams as "the royal road to the unconscious": dreams could help people reveal their hidden or repressed emotions and desires. Thus, Freudian dream psychology was born.

Consider Freud's concepts of the Id, Ego, and Superego. *Define* each below:

Ego: _____

Superego: _____

Id: _____

Freud termed as a "**primary process**" what the dreaming mind does when it turns unconscious desires/fears into symbols, and coined the term "**secondary process**" for the system which represses such impulses and symbols (unconscious desires/fears), through the conscience/reason.

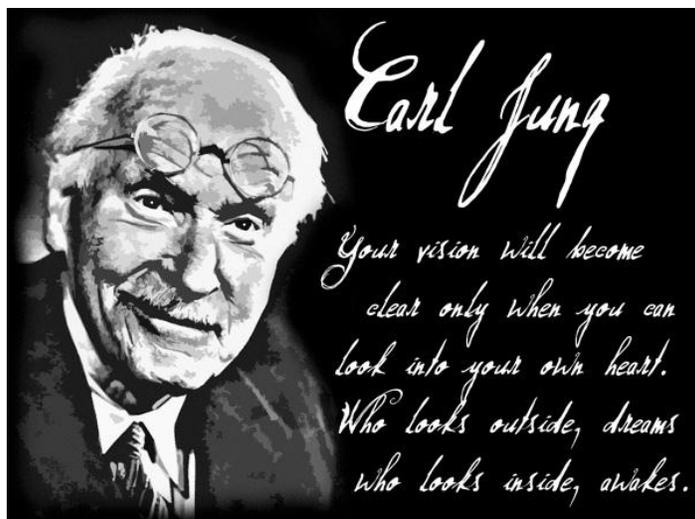
Freud saw the id as enacting its wish-fulfillments in dream form, symbolizing these wishes in order to not awaken the dreamer, and he concluded that the purpose of such symbolism is to preserve sleep, allowing the id to express animalistic desires without causing them to become conscious. For Freud, dreams functioned on two levels: the manifest content and the latent content. Manifest content is what the dreams seem to mean, and disguises the latent content; latent content, then, is what they actually mean, but is disguised by condensation (multiple dream meanings condensed to one symbol) and displacement (visual metaphors). Free association helped Freud discover the connections his patients made between symbols, and thus helped reveal the latent content for an authentic interpretation of patients' dreams.

C.G. Jung (1875 - 1961) ~ The Collective Unconscious

Carl Gustav Jung was not only Freud's friend but also his disciple, and between 1909 and 1913, he was largely in agreement with his friend about dream psychology. Jung eventually doubted that dreams are solely the product of the dreamer's own experiences (what Freud called the unconscious); he agreed that dreams are an expression of the unconscious mind shared by the human population. He found that patients shared remarkably similar dream themes from world myths, and thus deduced the existence of a "collective unconscious": an inherited level of the mind where myths are made, shared by all people throughout all cultures and time.

Jung saw the collective unconscious as the home to archetypes, which are basic attributes of the mind, encompassing universal experiences and characteristics. "Grand" dreams involving archetypes can be analyzed and interpreted in terms of mythology. Jung disagreed that Freud's methods kept dreams at the personal level. Using an "amplification" process, Jung was able to expand the dream experience for his patients by setting it in a mythic context. Thus, he arrived at a dream's mythic symbolic significance and theme(s).

Dismissing Freud's technique of free association, Jung identified and developed the technique of "direct association": each association in the dream sequence the patient offers is considered to be prompted by a certain aspect of the dream scenario. The meaning of each dream episode would be analyzed in three separate contexts - personal, cultural, and archetypal. If dreams represent our common, shared humanity, dreams then have a somewhat religious - or mythic - function, as our dreams can lead us on our journey of self-discovery and spiritual enlightenment; this is Jung's view.



How Can I Develop My Dream Memory?

- ✓ Consider your feelings about dreaming and/or your dreams - try to dispel any negative feelings or associations you have (eg. childhood nightmares, recurring frightening dreams, etc.). You may need to process your previous dreams with someone, and consider whether your attitudes have been affected by other people's dreams. Process these feelings.
- ✓ Affirm that dreaming is a positive aspect of your mental world.
- ✓ Remind yourself that dreams help you discover your authentic needs.
- ✓ Note that dreams offer revelations that may lead you to fulfill your life goals.
- ✓ Try to sleep on a harder bed, in a different room, or change your bed's position if you have difficulty sleeping, dreaming, or remembering your dreams upon awakening.
- ✓ Assure yourself that you **WILL DREAM**: everyone dreams. Not everyone automatically recalls their dreams, but confirm to yourself that you **WILL REMEMBER** yours.
- ✓ Before falling asleep, visualize your plan of awakening and the impressions you'll have.
- ✓ As soon as you awaken the next morning, recognize that you're in fact waking up, and then do your best to hold your dream / dream image in your mind to draw it to the conscious level and retrace your dream sequence(s). Suggestion: keep your dream journal beside your alarm!
- ✓ Fill out the dream journal pages immediately upon awakening and recollecting © The more detail you provide, the better - you'll eventually use these pages to write a critical thinking analysis of your dreams over the course of these weeks!





Dream Journal #1

Day / Date: _____

Time You Wrote This: _____

Summary / Content of Your Dream:

Recurring Themes / Actions / Symbols:



Your emotional reaction upon awakening:

Your interpretation of the dream sequence:

Interpretation of this dream, according to a dream dictionary:





Dream Journal #2

Day / Date: _____

Time You Wrote This: _____

Summary / Content of Your Dream:

Recurring Themes / Actions / Symbols:



Your emotional reaction upon awakening:

Your interpretation of the dream sequence:

Interpretation of this dream, according to a dream dictionary:





Dream Journal #3

Day / Date: _____

Time You Wrote This: _____

Summary / Content of Your Dream:

Recurring Themes / Actions / Symbols:



Your emotional reaction upon awakening:

Your interpretation of the dream sequence:

Interpretation of this dream, according to a dream dictionary:





Dream Journal #4

Day / Date: _____

Time You Wrote This: _____

Summary / Content of Your Dream:

Recurring Themes / Actions / Symbols:

Your emotional reaction upon awakening:

Your interpretation of the dream sequence:

Interpretation of this dream, according to a dream dictionary:





Dream Journal #5

Day / Date: _____

Time You Wrote This: _____

Summary / Content of Your Dream:

Recurring Themes / Actions / Symbols:



Your emotional reaction upon awakening:

Your interpretation of the dream sequence:

Interpretation of this dream, according to a dream dictionary:





Dream Journal #6

Day / Date: _____

Time You Wrote This: _____

Summary / Content of Your Dream:

Recurring Themes / Actions / Symbols:



Your emotional reaction upon awakening:

Your interpretation of the dream sequence:

Interpretation of this dream, according to a dream dictionary:





Dream Journal #7

Day / Date: _____

Time You Wrote This: _____

Summary / Content of Your Dream:

Recurring Themes / Actions / Symbols:



Your emotional reaction upon awakening:

Your interpretation of the dream sequence:

Interpretation of this dream, according to a dream dictionary:



Dream Analysis ~ Critical Thinking Response

- ✓ Once you have kept your dream journal for 1 - 3 weeks, analyze these journals.
- ✓ Your critical thinking response must address any/all of the following, or add your own (polished final copy - typed or hand-written, double-spaced using formal grammar, spelling, and punctuation - totaling 1.5 - 3 pages due _____):
- ❖ Were you able to control your dreams as you began to recall more and more of them?
- ❖ Were your dreams horrifying, boring, or any other particular adjective? How/why? What do you suppose this might say about your personality?
- ❖ What seems to be your dreams' major function/purpose: to problem-solve? Review the day? Warn you? Help you re-route your actions to align with priorities/goals?
- ❖ Have your dreams shared common threads (eg. moods, feelings, ideas, events, objects, people)? What do you suspect these common threads might indicate about you?
- ❖ Have any of your dreams been disturbing or particularly concerning? How/why?
- ❖ Were you able to easily interpret your dreams? If so, which one(s)? Describe one or two of your dreams and what they have meant to you, specifically. If you haven't been able to interpret one of your dreams, try it now: re-tell your dream and hypothesize what it could mean or might be symbolizing for you, your life, etc.
- ❖ NOTE: if you haven't been able to recall a single dream over the course of this project, compose a report on what dreams are, how they operate, the function(s) they serve, as well as which dream theory(ies) you agree and disagree with along with why/how. This will be a far more objective report than if you had recorded and analyzed your own dreams, so in this report, also describe your responses/reactions to our class discussions and readings insofar as they relate to the study and theories of dreams, etc.

