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Psychopaths

THE SYMBOLISM OF DREAMS

BY HAVELOCK ELLIS

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THE SYMBOLISM OF DREAMS

By HAVELOCK ELLIS

THE dramatization of subjective elements of the personality, which contributes so largely to render our dreams vivid and interesting, rests on that dissociation, or falling apart of the constituent groups of psychic centers, which is so fundamental a fact of dream-life. That is to say, that the usually coherent elements of our mental life are split up, and some of them—often, it is curious to note, precisely those which are at that very moment the most prominent and poignant—are reconstituted into what seems to us an outside and objective world, of which we are the interested or the merely curious spectators, but in neither case realize that we are ourselves the origin of.

An elementary source of this tendency to objectivation is to be found in the automatic impulse towards symbolism, by which all sorts of feelings experienced by the dreamer become transformed into concrete visible images. When objectivation is thus attained dissociation may be said to be secondary. So far indeed as I am able to dissect the dream-process, the tendency to symbolism seems nearly always to precede the dissociation in consciousness, though it may well be that the dissociation of the mental elements is a necessary subconscious condition for the symbolism.

Sensory symbolism rests on a very fundamental psychic tendency. On the abnormal side we find it in the synesthesias which, since Galton first drew attention to them in 1883 in his "Inquiries into Human Faculty," have become well known and are found among between six to over twelve per cent. of people. Galton investigated chiefly those kinds of synesthesias which he called "number-forms" and "color associations." The number-form is characteristic of those people who almost invariably think of numerals in some more or less constant form of visual imagery, the number instantaneously calling up the picture. In persons who experience color-associations, or colored-hearing, there is a similar instantaneous manifestation of particular colors in connection with particular sounds, the different vowel sounds, for instance, each constantly and persistently evolving a definite tint, as *a* white, *e* vermilion, *i* yellow, etc., no two forms, however, having exactly the same color scheme of sounds. These phenomena are not so very rare and, though they must be regarded as abnormal, they occur in persons who are perfectly healthy and sane.

It will be seen that a synesthesia—which may involve taste, smell

Jensen

and other senses besides hearing and sight—causes an impression of one sensory order to be automatically and involuntarily linked on to an impression of another totally different order. In other words, we may say that the one impression becomes the *symbol* of the other impression, for a symbol—which is literally a throwing together—means that two things of different orders have become so associated that one of them may be regarded as the sign and representative of the other.

There is, however, another still more natural and fundamental form of symbolism which is entirely normal, and almost, indeed, physiological. This is the tendency by which qualities of one order become symbols of qualities of a totally different order because they instinctively seem to have a similar effect on us. In this way, things in the physical order become symbols of things in the spiritual order. This symbolism penetrates indeed the whole of language; we can not escape from it. The sea is *deep* and so also may thoughts be; ice is *cold* and we say the same of some hearts; sugar is *sweet*, as the lover finds also the presence of the beloved; quinine is *bitter* and so is remorse. Not only our adjectives, but our substantives and our verbs are equally symbolical. To the etymological eye every sentence is full of metaphor, of symbol, of images that, strictly and originally, express sensory impressions of one order, but, as we use them to-day, express impressions of a totally different order. Language is largely the utilization of symbols. This is a well-recognized fact which it is unnecessary to elaborate.¹

An interesting example of the natural tendency to symbolism, which may be compared to the allied tendency in dreaming, is furnished by another language, the language of music. Music is a representation of the world—the internal or the external world—which, except in so far as it may seek to reproduce the actual sounds of the world, can only be expressive by its symbolism. And the symbolism of music is so pronounced that it is even expressed in the elementary fact of musical pitch. Our minds are so constructed that the bass always seems *deep* to us and the treble *high*. We feel it incongruous to speak of a *high* bass voice or a *deep* soprano. It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that this and the like associations are fundamentally based, that there are, as an acute French philosophic student of music, Dauriac (in an essay "Des Images Suggestées par l'Audition musicale") has expressed it, "sensorial correspondences," as, indeed, Baudelaire had long since divined; that the motor image is that which demands from the listener the minimum of effort; and that music almost constantly evokes motor imagery.²

¹Ferrero, in his "Lois Psychologiques du Symbolisme" (1895), deals broadly with symbolism in human thought and life.

²The motor imagery suggested by music is in some persons profuse and apparently capricious, and may be regarded as an anomaly comparable to a synesthesia. Heine was an example of this and he has described in "Florentine

The association between high notes and physical ascent, between low notes and physical descent is certainly in any case very fixed.³ In Wagner's "Lohengrin," the ascent and descent of the angelic chorus is thus indicated. Even if we go back earlier than the days of Bach the same correspondence is found. In the work of Bach himself—pure and abstract as his music is generally considered—this as well as much other motor imagery may be found, as is now generally recognized by students of Bach, following in the steps of Albert Schweitzer and André Pirro. It is sometimes said that this is "realism" in music. That is a mistake. When the impressions derived from one sense are translated into those of another sense there can be no question of realism. A composer may attempt a realistic representation of thunder, but his representation of lightning can only be symbolical; audible lightning can never be realistic.

Not only is there an instinctive and direct association between sounds and motor imagery, but there is an indirect but equally instinctive association between sounds and visual imagery which, though not itself motor, has motor associations. Thus Bleuler considers it well established that among color-hearers there is a tendency for photisms that are light in color (and belonging, we may say, to the "high" part of the spectrum) to be produced by sounds of high quality, and dark photisms by sounds of low quality; and, in the same way, sharply-defined pains or tactile sensations as well as pointed forms produce light photisms. Similarly, bright lights and pointed forms produce high phonisms, while low phonisms are produced by opposite conditions. Urbantschitsch, again, by examining a large number of people who were not color-hearers found that a high note of a tuning fork seems higher when looking at red, yellow, green or blue, but lower if looking at violet. Thus two sensory qualities that are both symbolic of a third quality are symbolic to each other.

This symbolism, we are justified in believing, is based on fundamental organic tendencies. Piderit, nearly half a century ago, forcibly argued that there is a real relationship of our most spiritual feelings

Nights" the visions aroused by the playing of Paganini, and elsewhere the visions evoked in him by the music of Berlioz. Though I do not myself experience this phenomenon I have found that there is sometimes a tendency for music to arouse ideas of motor imagery; thus some melodies of Handel suggest a giant painting frescoes on a vast wall space. The most elementary motor relationship of music is seen in the tendency of many people to sway portions of their body—to "beat time"—in sympathy with the music. Music is fundamentally an audible dance, and the most primitive music is dance music.

³The instinctive nature of this tendency is shown by the fact that it persists even in sleep. Thus Weygandt relates that he once fell asleep in the theater during one of the last scenes of "Cavalleria Rusticana," when the tenor was singing in ever higher and higher tones, and dreamed that in order to reach the notes the performer was climbing up ladders and stairs on the stage.

and ideas to particular bodily movements and facial expressions. In a similar manner, he pointed out that bitter tastes and bitter thoughts tend to produce the same physical expression.⁴ He also argued that the character of a man's looks—his *fixed* or *dreamy* eyes, his *lively* or *stiff* movements—correspond to real psychic characters. If this is so we have a physiological, almost anatomical, basis for symbolism. Cleland,⁵ again, in an essay "On the Element of Symbolic Correlation in Expression," argued that the key to a great part of expression is the correlation of movements and positions with ideas, so that there are, for instance, a host of associations in the human mind by which "upward" represents the good, the great, and the living, while "downward" represents the evil and the dead. Such associations are so fundamental that they are found even in animals, whose gestures are, as Féré⁶ remarked, often metaphorical, so that a cat, for instance, will shake its paw, as if in contact with water, after any disagreeable experiences.

The symbolism that to-day interpenetrates our language, and indeed our life generally, has mostly been inherited by us, with the traditions of civilization, from an antiquity so primitive that we usually fail to interpret it. The rare additions we make to it in our ordinary normal life are for the most part deliberately conscious. But so soon as we fall below, or rise above, that ordinary normal level—to insanity and hallucination, to childhood, to savagery, to folk-lore and legend, to poetry and religion—we are at once plunged into a sea of symbolism.⁷ There is even a normal sphere in which symbolism has free scope and that is in the world of dreams.

Oneiromancy, the symbolical interpretation of dreams, more especially as a method of divining the future, is a wide-spread art in early stages of culture. The discerning of dreams is represented in the old testament as a very serious and anxious matter (as in regard to Pharaoh's dream of the fat and lean cattle), and, nearer to our time, the dreams of great heroes, especially Charlemagne, are represented as highly important events in the medieval European epics. Little manuals on the interpretation of dreams have always been much valued by the uncultured classes, and among our current popular sayings there are many dicta concerning the significance, or the good or ill luck, of particular kinds of dreams.

Oneiromancy has thus slowly degenerated to folk-lore and supersti-

⁴ T. Piderit, "Mimik und Physiognomik," 1867, p. 73.

⁵ J. Cleland, "Evolution, Expression and Sensation," 1881.

⁶ Féré, "La Physiologie dans les Métaphores," *Revue Philosophique*, October, 1895.

⁷ Maeder discusses symbolism in some of these fields in his "Die Symbolik in den Legenden: Märchen, Gebräuchen und Träumen," *Psychiatrisch-Neurologische Wochenschrift*, Nos. 6 and 7, May, 1908.

tion. But at the outset it possessed something of the combined dignities of religion and of science. Not only were the old dream-interpreters careful of the significance and results of individual dreams in order to build up a body of doctrine, but they held that not every dream contained in it a divine message; thus they would not condescend to interpret dreams following on the drinking of wine, for only to the temperate, they declared, do the gods reveal their secrets. The serious and elaborate way in which the interpretation of dreams was dealt with is well seen in the treatise on this subject by Artemidorus of Daldi, a native of Ephesus, and contemporary of Marcus Aurelius. He divided dreams into two classes of *theorematic* dreams, which come literally true, and *allegorical* dreams. The first group may be said to correspond to the modern group of prophetic, proleptic or prodromic dreams, while the second group includes the symbolical dreams which have of recent years again attracted attention. Synesius, who lived in the fourth century and eventually became a Christian bishop without altogether ceasing to be a Greek pagan, wrote a very notable treatise on dreaming in which, with a genuinely Greek alertness of mind, he contrived to rationalize and almost to modernize the ancient doctrine of dream symbolism. He admits that it is in their obscurity that the truth of dreams resides and that we must not expect to find any general rules in regard to dreams; no two people are alike, so that the same dream can not have the same significance for every one, and we have to find out the rules of our own dreams. He had himself (like Galen) often been aided in his writings by his dreams, in this way getting his ideas into order, improving his style, and receiving criticisms of extravagant phrases. Once, too, in the days when he hunted, he invented a trap as a result of a dream. Synesius declares that our attention to divination by dreams is good on moral grounds alone. For he who makes his bed a Delphian tripod will be careful to live a pure and noble life. In that way he will reach an end higher than that he aimed at.⁸

It seems to-day by no means improbable that, amid the absurdities of this popular oneiromancy, there are some items of real significance. Until recent years, however, the absurdities have frightened away the scientific investigator. Almost the only investigator of the psychology of dreaming who ventured to admit a real symbolism in the dream world was Scherner,⁹ and his arguments were not usually accepted nor

⁸ A translation of Synesius's "Treatise on Dreams" is given by Druon, "Œuvres de Synésius," pp. 347 *et seq.*

⁹ K. A. Scherner, "Das Leben des Traumes," 1861. In France Hervey de Saint-Denis, in a remarkable anonymous work which I have not seen ("Les Rêves et les Moyens de les Diriger," p. 356, quoted by Vaschide and Piéron, "Psychologie du Rêve," p. 26), tentatively put forward a symbolic theory of dreams, as a possible rival to the theory that permanent associations are set up as the result of a first chance coincidence. "Do there exist," he asked,

even easy to accept. When we are faced by the question of definite and constant symbols it still remains true that scepticism is often called for. But there can be no manner of doubt that our dreams are full of symbolism.¹⁰

The conditions of dream-life, indeed, lend themselves with a peculiar facility to the formation of symbolism, that is to say, of images which, while evoked by a definite stimulus, are themselves of a totally different order from that stimulus. The very fact that we *sleep*, that is to say, that the avenues of sense which would normally supply the real image of corresponding order to the stimulus are more or less closed, renders symbolism inevitable.¹¹ The direct channels being thus largely choked, other allied and parallel associations come into play, and since the control of attention and apperception is diminished, such play is often unimpeded. Symbolism is the natural and inevitable result of these conditions.¹²

It might still be asked why we do not in dreams more often recognize the actual source of the stimuli applied to us. If a dreamer's feet are in contact with something hot, it might seem more natural that he should think of the actual hot-water bottle, rather than of an imaginary Etna, and that, if he hears a singing in his ears, he should argue the presence of the real bird he has often heard rather than a performance of Haydn's "Creation" which he has never heard. Here, however, we have to remember the tendency to magnification in dream imagery, a tendency which rests on the emotionality of dreams. Emotion is not "bizarre analogies of internal sensations in virtue of which certain vibrations of the nerves, certain instinctive movements of our viscera, correspond to sensations apparently quite different? According to this hypothesis experience would bring to light mysterious affinities, the knowledge of which might become a genuine science; . . . and a real key to dreams would not be an unrealizable achievement if we could bring together and compare a sufficient number of observations."

¹⁰It is interesting to note that hallucinations may also be symbolic. Thus the Psychological Research Society's Committee on Hallucinations recognized a symbolic group and recorded, for instance, the case of a man who, when his child lies dying sees a blue flame in the air and hears a voice say "That's his soul" (*Proceedings Society Psychological Research*, August, 1894, p. 125).

¹¹Maeder states that the tendency to symbolism in dreams and similar modes of psychic activity is due to "vague thinking in a condition of diminished attention." This is, however, an inadequate statement and misses the central point.

¹²In the other spheres in which symbolism most tends to appear, the same or allied conditions exist. In hallucinations, which (as Parish and others have shown) tend to occur in hypnagogic or sleep-like states, the conditions are clearly the same. The symbolism of an art, and notably music, is due to the very conditions of the art, which exclude any appeal to other senses. The primitive mind reaches symbolism through a similar condition of things, coming as the result of ignorance and undeveloped powers of apperception. In insanity these powers are morbidly disturbed or destroyed, with the same result.

mally heightened in dreams. Every impression reaches sleeping consciousness through this emotional atmosphere, in an enlarged form, vaguer it may be, but more massive. The sleeping brain is thus not dealing with actual impressions—if we are justified in speaking of the impressions of waking life as “actual”—even when actual impressions are being made upon it, but with transformed impressions. The problem before it is to find an adequate cause, not for the actual impression but for the transformed and enlarged impression. Under these circumstances symbolism is quite inevitable. Even when the nature of an excitation is rightly perceived its quality can not be rightly perceived. The dreamer may be able to perceive that he is being bitten but the massive and profound impression of a bite which reaches his dreaming consciousness would not be adequately accounted for by the supposition of the real mosquito that is the cause of it; the only adequate explanation of the transformed impression received is to be found (as in a dream of my own) in a creature as large as a lobster. This creature is the symbol of the real mosquito.¹³ We have the same phenomenon under somewhat similar conditions in the intoxication of chloroform and nitrous oxide.

The obscuration during sleep of the external sensory channels and the checks on false conclusions they furnish is not alone sufficient to explain the symbolism of dreams. The dissociation of thought during sleep, with the diminished attention and apperception involved, is also a factor. The magnification of special isolated sensory impressions in dreaming consciousness is associated with a general bluntness, even an absolute quiescence, of the external sensory mechanism. One part of the organism, and it seems usually a visceral part, is thus apt to magnify its place in consciousness at the expense of the rest. As Vaschide and Piéron say, during sleep “the internal sensations develop at the expense of the peripheral sensations.” That is indeed the secret of the immense emotional turmoil of our dreams. Yet it is very rare for these internal sensations to reach the sleeping brain as what they are. They become conscious not as literal messages, but as symbolical transformations. The excited or laboring heart recalls to the brain no memory of itself but some symbolical image of excitement or labor. There

¹³The magnification we experience in dreams is manifested in their emotional aspects and in the emotional transformation of actual sensory stimuli, from without or from within the organism. The size of objects recalled by dreaming memory usually remains unchanged, and if changed it seems to be more usually diminished. “Lilliputian hallucinations,” as they are termed by Leroy, who has studied them (*Revue de Psychiatrie*, 1909, No. 8), in which diminutive, and frequently colored, people are observed, may occasionally occur in alcoholic and chloral intoxication, in circular insanity and in various other morbid mental conditions. They are usually agreeable in character, and constitute a micropsia which is supposed to be due to some disturbance in the cortex of the brain.

is association, indeed, but it is association not along the matter-of-fact lines of our ordinary waking civilized life but along much more fundamental and primitive channels, which in waking life we have now abandoned or never knew.

There is another consideration which may be put forward to account for one group of dream-symbolisms. It has been found that certain hysterical subjects of old standing when in the hypnotic state are able to receive mental pictures of their own viscera, even though they may be quite ignorant of any knowledge of the shape of these viscera. This *autoscopy*, as it has been called, has been specially studied by Féré, Comar and Sollier.¹⁴ Hysteria is a condition which is in many respects closely allied to sleep, and if it is to be accepted as a real fact that autoscopy occasionally occurs in the abnormal psychic state of hypnotic sleep in hysterical persons, it is possible to ask whether it may not sometimes occur normally in the allied state of sleep. In the hypnotic state it is known that parts of the organism normally involuntary may become subject to the will; it is not incredible that similarly parts normally insensitive may become sufficiently sensitive to reveal their own shape or condition. We may thus indeed the more easily understand those premonitory dreams in which the dreamer becomes conscious of morbid conditions which are not perceptible to awaking consciousness until they have attained a greater degree of intensity.

The recognition of the transformation in dream life of internal sensations into symbolic motor imagery is ancient. Hippocrates said that to dream, for instance, of springs and wells denoted some disturbance of the bladder. Sometimes the symbolism aroused by visceral processes remains physiological; thus indigestion frequently leads to dreams of eating, as of chewing all sorts of inedible and repulsive substances, and occasionally—it would seem more abnormally—to agreeable dreams of food.

It is due to the genius of Professor Sigmund Freud, of Vienna—to-day the most daring and original psychologist in the field of morbid psychic phenomena—that we owe the long-neglected recognition of the large place of symbolism in dreaming. Scherner had argued in favor of this aspect of dreams, but he was an undistinguished and unreliable psychologist and his arguments failed to be influential. Freud avows himself a partisan of Scherner's theory of dreaming and opponent of all other theories,¹⁵ but his treatment of the matter is incomparably

¹⁴ Sollier, "L'Autoscopie Interne," *Revue Philosophique*, January, 1903. Sollier deals with the objections made to the reality of the phenomenon.

¹⁵ Freud, "Die Traumdeutung," p. 66. This work, published in 1900, is the chief and most extensive statement of Freud's views. A shorter statement is embodied in a little volume of the "Grenzfragen" Series, "Ueber den Traum," 1901. A brief exposition of Freud's position is given by Dr. A. Maeder of Zurich in "Essai d'Interpretation de Quelques Rêves," *Archives de Psychologie*,

more searching and profound. Freud, however, goes far beyond the fundamental—and, as I believe, undeniable—proposition that dream-imagery is largely symbolic. He holds that behind the symbolism of dreams there lies ultimately a *wish*; he believes, moreover, that this wish tends to be really of more or less sexual character, and, further, that it is tinged by elements that go back to the dreamer's infantile days. As Freud views the mechanism of dreams, it is far from exhibiting mere disordered mental activity, but is (much as he has also argued hysteria to be) the outcome of a desire, which is driven back by a kind of inhibition or censure (*i. e.*, that kind of moral check which is still more alert in the waking state) and is seeking new forms of expression. There is first in the dream the process of what Freud calls condensation (*Verdichtung*), a process which is that fusion of strange elements which must be recognized at the outset of every discussion of dreaming, but Freud maintains that in this fusion all the elements have a point in common, and overlie one another like the pictures in a Galtonian composite photograph. Then there comes the process of displacement or transference (*Verschiebung*), a process by which the really central and emotional basis of the dream is concealed beneath trifles. Then there is the process of dramatization or transformation into a concrete situation of which the elements have a symbolic value. Thus, as Maeder puts it,¹⁶ summarizing Freud's views, "behind the apparently insignificant events of the day utilized in the dream there is always an important idea or event hidden. We only dream of things that are worth while. What at first sight seems to be a trifle is a gray wall which hides a great palace. The significance of the dream is not so much held in the dream itself as in that substratum of it which has not passed the threshold and which analysis alone can bring to light."

"We only dream of things that are worth while." That is the point at which many of us are no longer able to follow Freud. That dreams of the type studied by Freud do actually occur may be accepted; it may even be considered proved. But to assert that all dreams must be made to fit into this one formula is to make far too large a demand. As regards the presentative element in dreams—the element that is

April, 1907; as also by Ernest Jones, "Freud's Theory of Dreams," *Review of Neurology and Psychiatry*, March, 1910, and *American Journal of Psychology*, April, 1910. For Freud's general psychological doctrine, see Brill's translation of "Freud's Selected Papers on Hysteria," 1909. There have been many serious criticisms of Freud's methods. As an example of such criticism, accompanying an exposition of the methods reference may be made to Max Isserlin's "Die Psychoanalytische Methode Freuds," *Zeitschrift für die Gesamte Neurologie und Psychiatrie*, Bd. I., Heft 1, 1910. A judicious and qualified criticism of Freud's psychotherapeutic methods is given by Löwenfeld, "Zum gegenwärtigen Stande der Psychotherapeutie," *Münchener medizinische Wochenschrift*, Nos. 3 and 4, 1910.

¹⁶ *Loc. cit.*, p. 374.

based on actual sensory stimulation—it is in most cases unreasonable to invoke Freud's formula at all. If when I am asleep the actual song of a bird causes me to dream that I am at a concert, that picture may be regarded as a natural symbol of the actual sensation and it is unreasonable to expect that psycho-analysis could reveal any hidden personal reason why the symbol should take the form of a concert. And, if so, then Freud's formula fails to hold good for phenomena which cover one of the two main divisions of dreams, even on a superficial classification, and perhaps enter into all dreams.

But even if we take dreams of the remaining or representative class—the dreams made up of images not directly dependent on actual sensation—we still have to maintain a cautious attitude. A very large proportion of the dreams in this class seem to be, so far as the personal life is concerned, in no sense "worth while." It would, indeed, be surprising if they were. It seems to be fairly clear that in sleep, as certainly in the hypnagogic state, attention is diminished, and apperceptive power weakened. That alone seems to involve a relaxation of the tension by which we will and desire our personal ends. At the same time by no longer concentrating our psychic activities at the focus of desire it enables indifferent images to enter more easily the field of sleeping consciousness. It might even be argued that the activity of desire when it manifests itself in sleep and follows the course indicated by Freud, corresponds to a special form of sleep in which attention and apperception, though in modified forms, are more active than in ordinary sleep.¹⁷ Such dreams seem to occur with special frequency, or in more definitely marked forms, in the neurotic and especially the hysterical, and if it is true that the hysterical are to some extent asleep even when they are awake, it may also be said that they are to some extent awake even when they are asleep. Freud certainly holds, probably with truth, that there is no fundamental distinction between normal people and psychoneurotic people, and that there is, for instance, as Ferenczi says emphasizing this point, "a streak of hysterical disposition in everybody." Freud has, indeed, made interesting analytic studies of his own dreams, but the great body of material accumulated by him and his school is derived from the dreams of the neurotic. Thus Stekel states that he has analyzed many thousand

¹⁷ This is supported by the fact that in waking reverie, or day-dreams, wishes are obviously the motor force in building up visionary structures. Freud attaches great importance to reverie, for he considers that it furnishes the key to the comprehension of dreams (*e. g.*, "Sammlung Kleiner Schriften zur Neurosenlehre," 2d series, pp. 138 *et seq.*, 197 *et seq.*). But it must be remembered that day-dreaming is not real dreaming which takes place under altogether different physiological conditions, although it may quite fairly be claimed that day-dreaming represents a state intermediate between ordinary waking consciousness and consciousness during sleep.

dreams, but his lengthy study on the interpretation of dreams deals exclusively with the dreams of the neurotic.¹⁸ Stekel believes, moreover, that from the structure of the dream life conclusions may be drawn not only as to the life and character of the dreamer, but also as to his neurosis, the hysterical person dreaming differently from the obsessed person, and so on. If that is the case we are certainly justified in doubting whether conclusions drawn from the study of the dreams of neurotic people can be safely held to represent the normal dream-life, even though it may be true that there is no definite frontier between them.¹⁹ Whatever may be the case among the neurotic, in ordinary normal sleep the images that drift across the field of consciousness, though they have a logic of their own, seem in a large proportion of cases to be quite explicable without resort to the theory that they stand in vital but concealed relationship to our most intimate self.

Even in waking life, and at normal moments which are not those of reverie, it seems possible to trace the appearance in the field of consciousness of images which are evoked neither by any mental or physical circumstance of the moment, or any hidden desire, images that are as disconnected from the immediate claims of desire and even of association as those of dreams seem so largely to be. It sometimes occurs to me—as doubtless it occurs to other people—that at some moment when my thoughts are normally occupied with the work immediately before me, then suddenly appears on the surface of consciousness a totally unrelated picture. A scene arises, vague but usually recognizable, of some city or landscape—Australian, Russian, Spanish, it matters not what—seen casually long years ago, and possibly never thought of since, and possessing no kind of known association either with the matter in hand or with my personal life generally. It comes to the surface of consciousness as softly, as unexpectedly, as disconnectedly, as a minute bubble might arise and break on the surface of an actual stream from ancient organic material silently disintegrating in the depths beneath.²⁰

¹⁸ The special characteristics of dreaming in the hysterical were studied, before Freud turned his attention to the question, by Sante de Sanctis, "I Sogni e il Sonno nell' Isterismo," 1896.

¹⁹ See also Havelock Ellis, "Studies in the Psychology of Sex," Vol. I., 3d ed., 1910, "Auto-crotism."

²⁰ Gissing, the novelist, an acute observer of psychic states, in the most personal of his books, "The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft," has described this phenomenon: "Every one, I suppose, is subject to a trick of mind which often puzzles me. I am reading or thinking, and at a moment, without any association or suggestion that I can discover, there rises before me the vision of a place I know. Impossible to explain why that particular spot should show itself to my mind's eye; the cerebral impulse is so subtle that no search may trace its origin." Gissing proceeds to say that a thought, a phrase, an odor, a touch, a posture of the body, may possibly have furnished the link of association, but he knows no evidence for this theory.

Every one who has traveled much can not fail to possess, hidden in his psychic depths a practically infinite number of such forgotten pictures, devoid of all personal emotion. It is possible to maintain, as a matter of theory, that when they come up to consciousness, they are evoked by some real though untraceable resemblance which they possess with the psychic or physical state existing when they reappear. But that theory can not be demonstrated. Nor, it may be added, is it more plausible than the simple but equally unprovable theory that such scenes do really come to the surface of consciousness, as the result of some slight spontaneous disintegration in a minute cerebral center and have no more immediately preceding psychic cause than my psychic realization of the emergence of the sun from behind a cloud has any psychic preceding cause.

Similarly, in insanity, Liepmann in his study "Ueber Ideenflucht" has forcibly argued that ordinary logorrhea—the incontinence of ideas linked together by superficial associations of resemblance or contiguity—is a linking *without direction*, that is, corresponding to no interest, either practical or theoretical, of the individual. Or, as Claparède puts it, logorrhea is a trouble in the reaction of *interest* in life. It seems most reasonable to believe that in ordinary sleep the flow of imagery follows, for the most part, the same easy course. That course may to waking consciousness often seem peculiar, but to waking consciousness the conditions of dreaming life are peculiar. Under these conditions, however, we may well believe that the tendency to movement in the direction of least resistance still prevails. And as attention and will are weakened and loosened during sleep, the tense concentration on personal ends must also be relaxed. We become more disinterested. Personal desire tends for the most part rather to fall into the background than to become more prominent. If it were not a period in which desire were ordinarily relaxed sleep would cease to be a period of rest and recuperation.

Sleeping consciousness is a vast world, a world only less vast than that of waking consciousness. It is futile to imagine that a single formula can cover all its manifold varieties and all its degrees of depth. Those who imagine that all dreaming is a symbolism which a single cypher will serve to interpret must not be surprised if, however unjustly, they are thought to resemble those persons who claim to find on every page of Shakespeare a cypher revealing the authorship of Bacon. In the case of Freud's theory of dream interpretation, I hold the cypher to be real, but I believe that it is impossible to regard so narrow and exclusive an interpretation as adequate to explain the whole world of dreams. It would, *a priori*, be incomprehensible that sleeping consciousness should exert so extraordinary a selective power among the variegated elements of waking life, and, experientially, there seems

no adequate ground to suppose that it does exert such selective action. On the contrary, it is, for the most part, supremely impartial in bringing forward and combining all the manifestations, the most trivial as well as the most intimate, of our waking life. There is a symptom of mental disorder called *extrospection* in which the patient fastens his attention so minutely on events that he comes to interpret the most trifling signs and incidents as full of hidden significance, and may so build up a systematized delusion.²¹ The investigator of dreams must always bear in mind the risk of falling into morbid extrospection.

Such considerations seem to indicate that it is not true that every dream, every mental image, is "worth while," though at the same time they by no means diminish the validity of special and purposive methods of investigating dream consciousness. Freud and those who are following him have shown, by the expenditure of much patience and skill, that his method of dream-interpretation may in many cases yield coherent results which it is not easy to account for by chance. It is quite possible, however, to recognize Freud's service in vindicating the large places of symbolism in dream, and to welcome the application of his psycho-analytic method to dreams, while yet denying that this is the only method of interpreting dreams. Freud argues that all dreaming is purposive and significant and that we must put aside the belief that dreams are the mere trivial outcome of the dissociated activity of brain centers. It remains true, however, that, while reason plays a larger part in dreams than most people realize—the activity of dissociated brain centers furnishes one of the best keys to the explanation of psychic phenomena during sleep. It would be difficult to believe in any case that in the relaxation of sleep our thoughts are still pursuing a deliberately purposeful direction under the control of our waking impulses. Many facts indicate—though Freud's school may certainly claim that such facts have not been thoroughly interpreted—that, as a matter of fact, this control is often conspicuously lacking. There is, for instance, the well-known fact that our most recent and acute emotional experiences—precisely those which might most ardently formulate themselves in a wish—are rarely mirrored in our dreams, though recent occurrences of more trivial nature, as well as older events of more serious import, easily find place there. That is easily accounted for by the supposition—not quite in a line with a generalized wish-theory—that the exhausted emotions of the day find rest at night.

It must also be said that even when we admit that a strong emotion may symbolically construct an elaborate dream edifice which needs analysis to be interpreted, we narrow the process unduly if we assert that the emotion is necessarily a wish. Desire is certainly very funda-

²¹ Extrospection has been specially studied by Vaschide and Vurpas in "La Logique Morbide."

mental in life and very primitive. But there is another equally fundamental and primitive emotion—fear.²² We may very well expect to find this emotion, as well as desire, subjacent to dream phenomena.²³

The wish-dream of the kind elaborately investigated by Freud may be accepted as, in what he terms its infantile form, extremely common, and, even in its symbolic forms, a real and not rare phenomenon. But it is impossible to follow Freud when he declares that the wish-dream is the one and only type of dream. The world of psychic life during sleep is, like the waking world, rich and varied; it can not be covered by a single formula. Freud's subtle and searching analytic genius has greatly contributed to enlarge our knowledge of this world of sleep. We may recognize the value of his contribution to the psychology of dreams while refusing to accept a premature and narrow generalization.

²² On the psychic importance of fears, see G. Stanley Hall, "A Study of Fears," *American Journal of Psychology*, 1897, p. 183. Metchnikoff ("Essais Optimistes," pp. 247 *et seq.*) insists on the mingled fear and strength of the anthropoid apes.

²³ Foucault has pointed this out, and Morton Prince, and Giessler (who admits that the wish-dream is common in children), and Flournoy (who remarks that not only a fear but any emotion can be equally effective), as well as Claparède. The last admits that Freud might regard a fear as a suppressed desire, but it may equally be said that a desire involves, on its reverse side, a fear. Freud has indeed himself pointed out (*e. g.*, *Jahrbuch für Psychoanalytische Forschungen*, Bd. 1, 1909, p. 362) that fears may be instinctively combined with wishes; he regards the association with a wish of an opposing fear as one of the components of some morbid psychic states. But he holds that the wish is the positive and fundamental element: "The unconscious can only wish" ("Das Unbewusste kann nichts als wünschen"), a statement that seems somewhat too metaphysical for the psychologist.







