THOUGHTS ABOUT THINKING AND DREAMING, AND THE FREUDIAN EXPLAN- ATION OF DREAMS.*

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THINKING and dreaming! How easily the one passes into the other! Our thoughts begin to 'wander' when we are tired, or when we allow our minds to enter into a reverie or day-dream or to 'build castles in the air'. When we are tired-out over literary or other work, necessitating much and long-continued efforts of our reasoning faculties, our thoughts tend at last to 'wander'—the voluntary, directed, objective efforts of the fully conscious mind give way to the easy, swiftly flowing, objectless, but usually pleasurable, play of fantasy—heralding the approach of a state of subconsciousness and the overpowering onset of deep sleep and complete unconsciousness.

So also I believe that the unconsciousness which often comes before death is not rarely preceded by a dream-like state of the mind—a condition free from pain, which may be an actually pleasurable one of mental euphoria. In exhausted and toxic conditions (septic fevers, etc.) of the body, the mind is indeed often mercifully allowed to 'wander', and an easy dream-like subconscious state of mental fantasy, or a 'busy', but mostly not unhappy, delirium succeeds the conscious pain, malaise, or wretchedness of grave disease.

The visual and auditory hallucinations and delusions in severe diseases, toxic conditions (delirium tremens, etc.), and various forms of insanity are *pathological* dream-like phenomena, resembling ordinary, more or less *physiological*, dreams in being unrestrained by the higher psychical controlling mechanism (that is to say, by the normal mind). They consist, like ordinary dreams, of a series of images and sensations running riot—for example, the kaleidoscopic (often *kakeidoscopic*) ever-changing hallucinations and delusions of delirium tremens. The difference between the more or less normal

* I have here made a few additions to these "thoughts on the endless subject of thinking", which were written about the end of 1918 (under the heading, "Thinking and Dreaming and the Explanation of Dreams"), as a contribution to the volumes dedicated to Sir William Osler on his 70th birthday (published by Paul B. Hoeber, New York). Since then similar criticisms have, I believe, been published in regard to the exaggerated significance attached by Freud to the sexual element in dreams.—F. P. W.

phenomena of ordinary dreaming and the pathological phenomena of such hallucinations and delusions is that in the former it is only the borderland between the fully conscious and the unconscious regions of the mind that is concerned, whereas in the latter the whole mental field may be involved, for the higher portion has undergone a (probably only temporary) regressive change, so as to have become reduced to the condition of the subconscious mind.

On every side, and from whichever way we look at it, thinking passes gradually into dreaming—or rather, the fully conscious, objective, and reasoning effort of thinking falls to a lower, semiconscious, easily-flowing, and unrestrained ‘play of thought’, which tends to become more and more fanciful as it gradually passes altogether out of the limits of voluntary control. Such dream-like thought doubtless represents the mode of thinking characteristic of our infancy, and of our remote ancestry (the childhood of the whole human race), and (probably to some extent also) of animals.

Allowing the thoughts to ‘wander’, the phenomena of reverie, day-dreams, and ‘building castles in the air’, furnish us with the connecting links between the normal adult mode of thinking on the one hand, and true dreaming on the other. Some young (and even older) persons fall more readily than others into a habit of day-dreaming and building castles in the air, and many of them must indeed welcome their day-dreams and gladly seek to indulge a habit which gives them pleasure and fairy-like delights as compensation for the hard realities of their actual life’s experience.

In true dreaming during sleep—generally preceding the onset of deep (completely unconscious) sleep, or heralding the return to wakefulness—voluntary control of the thoughts is entirely absent, and the mind runs its own subconscious course, free from the (sometimes rather irksome) fetters of reason and conscience, and unguided by its own god-like will-power. Reversion to the primitive dream-like method of thought may be beneficial, even when undesired, and often comes as a relief to mortals exhausted by fatigue, shock, or disease. In fact, effortless dream-thought may be restful to the mind, just as intervals of ease and sleep are refreshing to the body.

C. G. Jung,¹ of Zürich, insists that the comparison of the themes of dreams with those of myths (mythology) suggests the idea—as explained by Nietzsche and Freud—that from a phylogenetic point of view dream-thought is a regressive phenomenon and should be regarded as an older form of thought: in fact, that dreaming represents the survival of a kind of childish (infantile) or ancestral mode of thinking. How well Nietzsche² expressed this idea is shown by the following quotation given by Jung:³ “In our sleep and in our dreams we pass through the whole thought of earlier humanity. I

mean, in the same way that man reasons in his dreams, he reasoned when in the waking state many thousands of years. . . . The dream carries us back into earlier states of human culture, and affords us a means of understanding it better. The dream-thought is so easy to us now. . . . To a certain extent the dream is a restorative for the brain, which during the day is called upon to meet the severe demands for trained thought made by the conditions of a higher civilization. From these facts we can understand how lately more acute logical thinking—the taking seriously of cause and effect—has been developed; when our functions of reason and intelligence still reach back involuntarily to those primitive forms of conclusion”. Of the two modes of thought, Jung points out⁴ that modern adult trained thought (directed thinking), working for communication with speech elements, is troublesome and exhausting, whereas dream-thought (the infantile or ancestral mode of thought) goes on without trouble, working spontaneously with reminiscences.

Nothing seems to me (F. P. W.) better able to illustrate and contrast the two main classes (conscious and subconscious) of thought than the following considerations on mental preoccupation from the psycho-analytical point of view. When a person's mind is preoccupied by anxieties, regrets, or disagreeable ideas, there is a desire to go back—‘retire into one's self’, search one's mind, and analyze the disquieting elements in it (vague and almost subconscious though they may be). It is difficult to readily ‘collect one's thoughts’ for the immediate work before one—one wishes to clear the mind first, in order to start afresh on the ordinary practical business of one's daily life. When immediate work is very urgent, however, and one has to do it, one may succeed in driving back the disturbing elements into the subconscious regions of the mind. Even then one's mind does not work normally, rapidly, and smoothly as it generally does in most persons—‘the machinery wants oiling’—or, in telephonic language, ‘the junctions are engaged’ just when one wants to use them. Clearly, in the mental processes employed for ordinary voluntary work, the subconscious part of the mind plays a part—probably an important connecting part, as if it were a region through which the ‘wires of telephonic communication’ have to pass, *by means of which* the ‘voluntary run of one's thoughts’ is facilitated, checked, and ‘fed’ or ‘nourished’ and embellished (that is to say, with the memory or subconscious memory of experiences or of what one has witnessed, heard, or read of). Compare the useful part played by the subconscious mind in the phenomena of ‘suddenly remembering something’ that had ‘escaped one's memory’, or when ‘something is suddenly called back to one's mind’ by a process of rapid involuntary mental association.

Ordinary experience seems to me⁵ to explain dreams (from another point of view) as hallucinations (visual, auditory, etc.)—or rather, as a series of images and sensations—presenting themselves to the subconscious mind, or the border (‘twilight’) region between unconsciousness and complete consciousness—founded on or suggested

by incidents, impressions, or thoughts in the dreamer's previous, generally quite recent, life—often disturbed, disconnected, or fantastic, owing to the necessary absence of control by the higher conscious mind (the psychical controlling mechanism), and often, therefore, untrue to life and opposed to the dreamer's character, at least to his actions when under the guidance and control of his conscious mind. Bergson pointed out that dreams result from 'relaxed consciousness'—in other words, they result owing to the working of the mind becoming temporarily regressive, trained (directed) conscious (wakeful) thought giving place to the easier (flowing) 'ancestral' dream-thought. It is no wonder, therefore, that what a person during sleep dreams that he does (his action in his dreams) is often out of keeping with what is known of his previous life. In ordinary wakeful conversation some persons will lazily content themselves with a mere guess at the meaning of a word that they do not understand. In dreams, when any question as to the meaning of anything arises, the first explanation that presents itself to the dream-mind is generally unhesitatingly accepted, however improbable it may be. There is a child-like readiness to believe anything—any 'fairy tale'!

If the above-stated conception of the nature of dreams be admitted, how can one support the Freudian claims that nearly all dreams allow of an obvious or latent (cryptic) sexual interpretation? Such teaching seems opposed both to theory and to common experience, and in fact to be irrational. In ordinary thought a sexual character is only occasionally present—why should it invariably be present in dream-thought? Most persons ordinarily think and dream (if they know that they have any dreams at all) about matters which have nothing specially to do with sex. One might just as well seek to explain all the fancies and hallucinations of delirium tremens and all the delirious ideas and delusions of fevers and acute mania as if they always rested on a sexual basis.

In many cases the correct source or starting-point of dreams can readily be found in the dreamer's previous experiences, what he has done, witnessed, listened to, been told of, read of, thought of, approved of, disapproved of, or discussed; that is to say, in his previous (generally recent) life. But the bulk of ordinary emotion in life is not of a sexual nature. In a recent paper⁶ I gave illustrations of what was supposed to 'constitute life' amongst ordinary sensual individuals in bygone times, when the general public was, as a rule, little reticent on sexual matters, and did not endeavour so much as now to conceal the sexual factor in every-day life.

Then as now, to the average kind of sensual individual, 'life', or the sensual gratification of life, was largely a matter of: (1) Eating and drinking, satisfying to the full the imperious basic instincts of

preventing starvation and thirst; (2) Hunting, sport, outdoor games and bathing, obtaining food, and keeping one's body in health by suitable muscular exercise, cleanliness, and friendly competition; (3) Indoor games, music, art, and social amusements, satisfying the instinct for ordinary pleasant domestic and social recreations and emotions; (4) Sexual matters, that is to say, functions and emotions connected with the instinct of reproduction, have always taken their due part in popular ideas of 'life', though this is not such a large and exclusive part as some modern writers have apparently supposed.

We may safely take it, I think, that amongst ordinary sensual human beings of past and present times the basic and dominating desires and enjoyments of fully conscious (wakeful) life have been by no means limited to those of the sexual class—and so it is with dreams. The sexual element in dreams is doubtless greater than the sexual element in wakeful life, which is under conscious mental guidance; but sexual ideas, emotions, etc., do not by any means monopolize dreams. Ordinary individuals dream of common incidents in their daily life, their ordinary occupations, duties, work, recreations, pleasures, successes, failures, disappointments, eating and drinking, riding, hunting, shooting, outdoor and indoor sports and games, music, art, and 'hobbies', social entertainments, conversations with friends, etc. Naturally, in disordered states of the higher nervous system, due to shock, overstrain, fatigue, toxic conditions, fevers, etc., and, when the stomach or intestines are distended or diseased, nightmare-like dreams of a terrifying nature are not uncommon. A neurotic child, brought up in an atmosphere of fairy tales of old-fashioned days, is likely often to dream of witches, hobgoblins, and man-eating ogres. A young woman saturated with the vampire legends of Eastern Europe might, during the delirious state of acute pneumonia, have fancies resembling those of 'Lenore' in G. A. Bürger's well-known ballad of that title (translated by Sir Walter Scott). So soldiers, during and after the dangers and strain of active warfare, may be restless and call out in their sleep owing to exciting or terrifying dreams, as described by Lucretius and Shakespeare.

F. W. Mott, indeed, in his paper on the 'Psychology of Soldiers' Dreams',⁷ in which he gives the appropriate quotations from Lucretius and Shakespeare, has pointed out that fear, terror, and horror, connected as they are with the fundamental instinct of self-preservation, are at least just as likely to be represented in dreams as sexual ideas and emotions. The latter are connected with the important instinct of reproduction (propagation of one's kind and survival of the species), but the instinct of self-preservation is probably still more basic and still more dominating. Both are, of course, especially powerful when the highest mental guidance is

impaired, and when subconscious influences are allowed more or less uncontrolled play.

In whichever way one regards it, whether from the point of view of ordinary human experience or from that of theoretical probability, the Freudian teaching that nearly all dreams have a sexual explanation is most unlikely to be true, or the element of truth in it is so exaggerated as to appear preposterous.

I do not believe that the elaborate Freudian explanation of dreams and morbid ideas by symbols is justified in the majority of cases by actual facts. Most persons do not usually think in symbols, nor do they usually dream in symbols. But for those who seek a cryptic explanation on any subject, and by a kind of infatuation or self-suggestion believe that they have found one, no gulf in their line of argument is too broad to bridge over, no mouthful of improbability is too large to swallow, in order to convince themselves that they have proved the correctness of their arguments. Witness the futile, though sometimes at first sight plausible, arguments and the wasted time (in searching for cryptographic clues, etc.) of those who set out to prove to others—after having almost convinced themselves—that the plays of Shakespeare were the work of Francis Bacon.* There are certain old Italian medals and plaques, cast in bronze during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and perhaps later, which represent a fanciful profile portrait, so made that, on careful examination, it resolves itself into a number of *phalli*. The whole portrait (possibly originally devised as an 'apotropæic' amulet for averting the 'evil eye') is made up of these phallic emblems skilfully pieced together so as (all of them together) to represent the portrait in question. Several minor works of art, if they can be thus styled, of various periods are in existence in which either phalli or death's heads† or other symbols or emblems have been purposely concealed

* We have not yet heard the end of these discussions. If Shakespeare *could not* have written the plays, and if Bacon and other Englishmen *did not* write them, and if, after all, they were not 'made in Germany', who then did write them? Why, it was Erasmus of Rotterdam, of course! He wrote them in Latin, one of them every night, during part of his visit to England, and gave them, as a souvenir of his visit, to his friend, Sir Thomas More. When the latter was executed, the manuscripts passed, somehow or other, into the Bacon family, and, later on, Lord Bacon and Shakespeare made them topical and dished them up in English for the English court and the English people. No wonder that they contain echoes of the epigrams of Palladas and the Greek Anthology that Erasmus so much admired! Oh, but what about the proof? The proof is a 'cryptic' one, relying on cryptograms and symbols, but it is unfortunately not yet completely worked out!

† Here I might refer also to the hidden 'death-mask' which it has been claimed was purposely included in the design of certain postage stamps issued in Serbia (1904) not long after the political murder of King Alexander I and his queen Draga (1903). The 'death-mask' is said to resemble the features of the murdered sovereign. The stamps in question, commemorating the coronation of the royal successor, King Peter I, were engraved by Louis Eugène Mouchon, a Parisian artist well known in connection

by the artist, who has evidently taken a delight in his skill in this direction. There have been collectors and archæologists, however, who have sought to find a *cryptic* phallus, or phallic signification, in most ancient (primitive) monuments and customs. Some of these investigators of origins may, indeed, have been said to have serpents and phallic emblems 'on the brain'. Similarly, some followers of Freud seem to have sexual explanations for almost everything, and sexual symbolism 'on the brain'.

The sexual instinct doubtless plays an immense part in the conscious and subconscious life of most individuals, but there are many other *driving motives in life*⁸ besides those connected with sex, not to mention those very powerful ones—rivalry, resistance, and fear—connected as they are with the instinct of self-preservation. In the relatively primitive mental eyes of the ancient world, as I have already pointed out, 'life was constituted' not merely by sexual enjoyments and emotions, but also doubtless (as now) by interesting occupations, professional work, ambitions and aspirations, eating, drinking, hunting, social amusements, games of various kinds, etc.

Is there any way of reconciling the Freudian teaching as to the sexual explanation of dreams (and human active life generally) with other considerations such as those I have alluded to? Yes. There is one, I think—namely, by arbitrarily altering the definition of such terms as 'love', 'libido', etc., so as to make 'love' include almost every desire and passion, almost all psychical force, every thought or idea which activates life—in fact to make of it a kind of 'joy of life', '*élan vital*', a vital influence pervading everything, whatever human beings do or busy themselves about (*quicquid agunt homines*). This is, indeed, what, as it seems to me, Jung has done. Witness the following passages from his writings:⁹ "All psychical phenomena can be considered as manifestations of energy in the same way as all physical phenomena are already understood as energetic manifestations.

with the production of medals, plaques, postage stamps, etc. They became known as the 'death-mask stamps', and the whole issue was quickly withdrawn by the Serbian government, but not before a great number had been circulated, and specimens can still be easily obtained from the dealers. The 'death-mask' is seen only when the stamps are turned upside down. Harry de Windt (*Through Savage Europe*, London, 1907, p. 164) alluded to the subject as follows: "Only a week after his arrival Peter sustained a severe shock in connection with the Jubilee stamp which was struck in commemoration of his coronation. The stamp bears the heads of the present ruler and his ancestor, 'Black George', and at first sight the clever device of some revolutionary artist is unnoticeable. But turn it upside down, and the gashed and ghastly features of the murdered King stand out with unmistakable clearness—just as they appeared when Alexander and his consort were discovered in the grey dawn of that summer's morning in the gardens of the old Konak. Needless to state, the issue was at once prohibited". My own opinion (F. P. W.) is that the presence of the so-called 'death-mask' was a mere chance, though certainly a strange coincidence—a curious and undesired by-product of human art, analogous to a *lusus naturæ*, or extraordinary effect produced in Nature's workshop, as when a pebble resembles a human head or a rock resembles a toad or a bird or a pulpit.

. . . This energy is subjectively and psychologically conceived as desire. I call it *libido*. . . . From a broader standpoint libido can be understood as *vital energy in general*, or as Bergson's *élan vital*. . . . By libido I understand very much what antiquity meant by the cosmogenic principle of *Eros*—in modern terminology simply *psychic energy*".

Truly all this is literally making 'no end' of love; for according to it everything is love, and it reminds me of the following motto or 'posy' engraved on an old finger-ring:—

" Like to this sirkell round,
No end to love is found."

There is, I believe, a real element of truth in all this, in so far as (to a certain extent) superfluous sexual force may (by some process of metamorphosis, analogous to transformation of ordinary physical forces, according to the law of conservation of energy) be diverted into and 'activate' (? harmonic action) other and useful channels, so as to increase the quantity and quality of the physical and mental outputs in other directions. This consideration, by the way, likewise helps to explain some of the beneficial effects of work and occupation on the mind and body¹⁰—effects that have been admirably pointed out by Thomas Carlyle in the enthusiastic encomium on work and labour included in his *Past and Present*, which was published in 1843. Sir William Osler, in equally fine language, maintains the value of work in his Address to Students of Yale University (1913), in which he quotes Carlyle's sentence: "Our main business is not to see what lies dimly at a distance, but to do what lies clearly at hand". This does not mean, of course, that man should not live to some extent for the future. Most men derive pleasure from actively striving after results they hope to obtain in the future. The pleasure derived from hopeful endeavouring to obtain is often greater than the pleasure derived from actual possession. But I must leave off here before I am tempted to enter into another discussion which has little to do with my main subject.

POSTSCRIPT.

In the above writing I have hesitated in describing the play of dream-like phantasies on going to sleep (including 'hypnagogic hallucinations') as *quite* normal. Some persons of course are aware of none. Others, like myself, are aware of them at times, but not always, and their occurrence may be favoured by preceding mental excitement, or by mental stimulation, as for instance by tea, coffee, or certain toxic conditions connected with the alimentary canal. In my own case, it frequently happens that when sitting in the evening reading or studying I begin to doze. The scene changes, and I hear

various sounds, generally someone speaking to me, or perhaps I hear myself addressing someone*—almost always on trivial, everyday, not disagreeable, subjects. For instance, someone may be asking me: "What time did you say?" or, "Have you left your gloves?" The scene varies; sometimes it may be the foot of a staircase very familiar to me. The associated general sensations are usually pleasurable, and there is a feeling of *bien-être* (*euphoria*). Sometimes there is, however, an accompanying disagreeable oversensitiveness to *real* sounds (hyperacusis), as, for instance, when a person is actually talking in the same room, and there may be sensations of discomfort on being drawn back to ordinary wakeful life again.† Sometimes, on commencing to doze, my thoughts remain (wandering) on what I have just been studying, and on waking up I find to my annoyance that I have only imagined myself to be still studying, and that in reality I have got no further on with my work (i.e., in reading a book) than when I commenced to doze. Sometimes, however, dozing or sleeping after studying has, as is well known, the effect of making problems of various kinds easier to solve, or of making one's work become less difficult to finish (the subconscious mind having adapted itself for that purpose during the interval of sleep).

The 'rapid play' of phantasies on commencing to 'doze off' seems sometimes very remarkable, and reminds me very much of what I have observed in patients with 'busy' delirium tremens, only

* On these occasions I may have sufficient reasoning power left to conclude (from the memory of frequent previous experiences) that I am commencing to doze off over my work, and by a vigorous effort of the will I can sometimes shake the sleep off, get up from my chair, walk about, and then go on with my work again. I do not always identify the voices speaking to me with special individuals, though I feel that I could if I were to try. But this is true to nature in regard to myself, as the following occurrence shows. One night during the war I was walking home to Harley Street by Market Place, near Oxford Circus, thinking of something. There was little light, owing to the danger of air-raids. Suddenly I felt a rather violent hand on my right shoulder, and thought that some old friend of mine must be playfully disturbing my thoughts in that way. I did not trouble to look round, but the next moment a violent tug at my watch-chain roused me up. The watch-chain was gone (fortunately leaving the watch in my pocket), and a man was running away several yards in front of me. I gave chase, and shouted "Stop thief" at the top of my voice. The chase was taken up by others, though I temporarily lost sight of the man. Someone was soon caught, who had many convictions to his credit in the police records, but he had not my watch-chain in his possession when he was caught, and, as the first thing I saw on this occasion was the back of a man running away, I could not swear that he was the man who seized my watch-chain. He was, therefore, discharged, somewhat to the annoyance of the special constable who had caught him. Strangely enough, several months later, the man in question, I think, whom I had seen in the dock, reappeared as a patient (though I did not at first recognize him). I took some blood from a vein to try the Wassermann reaction, but he did not like this and nearly fainted, and, to my annoyance, did not reappear at the hospital to hear the result, and for further examination and treatment; he seemed also to have given a wrong address. I must apologize for having in this footnote wandered away from my main subject.

† It has occurred to me, as it doubtless has to very many others, that dying patients may sometimes feel anything but gratified on being temporarily dragged back to earthly life by hypodermic injections of strychnine, ether, and such-like.

that my play of phantasies appears to me kaleidoscopic, whereas that of patients with delirium tremens is usually what might be termed *kakeidoscopic*.

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- ² NIETZSCHE, *Human, all too Human*, ii, 27 *et seq.*
- ³ JUNG, *op. cit.*, 28.
- ⁴ JUNG, *op. cit.*, 22.
- ⁵ Cf. WEBER, F. PARKES, "A Note on Dreams", *Practitioner*, 1918, c, 472-7.
- ⁶ *Ibid.*
- ⁷ MOTT, F. W., Psychiatric Section of the Royal Society of Medicine, 1918, Jan. 8 (*Lancet*, 1918, i, 169).
- ⁸ Cf. ARMSTRONG-JONES, *Practitioner*, 1917, xcviii, 216.
- ⁹ JUNG, C. G., *op. cit.*
- ¹⁰ WEBER, F. PARKES, "Exercise, Work, Rest, and Sleep : Comparison of Sayings", *Practitioner*, 1918, ci, 146.