

AN INTRODUCTION TO DREAM INTERPRETATION



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Most human beings dream at least occasionally, and sleep phenomena in general have been of interest to mankind from the earliest times. In spite of extensive research, the physiological nature of sleep, and the state of consciousness during the suspension of objectivity in the sleeping state, are not fully understood. In any department of living in which sufficient factual information is lacking, there is bound to be a wide area of speculation. Psychological exploration of man's interior life has definitely revealed the importance of dream symbolism as a means of interpreting subjective pressures. By degrees, the mysteries of the dream state are being explored.

On the primitive level of ancient tribal existence, man's dream-life was intimately associated with religion and magic. It was assumed that the dream experience was as real and valid as experience on the waking level. By crossing the threshold of sleep, man came into contact with an invisible world populated with spirits, the ghosts of the dead, and wandering souls that had temporarily separated from their bodies. This led to the inevitable conclusion that the dreamer himself, leaving his corporeal form behind, had passed into an invisible realm where he communed with creatures invisible to his mortal perceptions.

Initiatory dreams were accepted as direct contacts with the deities controlling the destiny of the tribe or clan. These ghostly guardians could instruct the dreamer in the lore and wisdom of his people, ordain him as their messenger and confer upon him

priestly powers and privileges. A related practice was the performance of vigil, intimately connected with the maturity rites of antiquity. In the performance of vigil, the candidate for final admission into his tribal rights and privileges departed to some remote place, and gave himself to fasting and prayer. Perhaps due to intense expectancy or other pressures within himself, the candidate usually experienced significant dreams by which his totem, or guardian spirit, revealed itself to him and he was variously strengthened in his resolution to become a good and upright member of his social order.

Even at this early period, the dream state was often induced by hypnosis or narcotics, or by the hysteria resulting from emotional frenzy. Medicine priests, and their parallels in other countries, were presumed to have the power to enter the sleeping state at will and in their trances and meditations to become aware of facts and circumstances otherwise unknowable.

With the rise of classical civilization and the strengthening of man's philosophic insight, dreams were gradually divided into two classes or kinds. Prophetic dreams remained associated with religion and mysticism, but it became evident that other causes were both possible and probable. Plato recognized a distinct relationship between dreams and the normal waking state of the individual, but he also allowed for the existence of prophetic dreams and those of a telepathic nature, which could arise within the person or might be communicated to him from the soul world. Regardless of the source, Plato affirmed that dreams could be significant, and that they should be interpreted with the aid of the rational faculties.

The Stoics in general accepted dreams as a channel by which divine revelations could be communicated to the human faculties. Pliny, always a cautious man, wrote that dreams are to be accepted as supernatural, except those that follow closely after

eating. Aristotle and Cicero expressed viewpoints on this subject almost identical with those held by modern psychologists. Hippocrates and Galen approached the matter with emphasis upon medicine and therapy, and unfolded the concept of *prodromic* dreams, which will be discussed a little later.

Persons of all ages dream, but there are certain indications which have contributed to the conclusion that small children dream less frequently than adolescents, or at least do not remember their dreams as often. A similar situation exists with the aged, whose dream life is less vivid, and whose dream experiences are less distinct and ordered. The period of maturity, therefore, is associated with the maximum of the dreaming propensity. Broadly speaking, women remember their dreams more often than men, and usually exhibit a wider variety of dream symbolism.

During the period of sleep, dream activity appears to be unevenly distributed. A certain class of this phenomenon appears to be prevalent at the time of transition from waking to sleeping, following closely upon the initial drowsiness which precedes complete repose. The height of the dream intensity, however, is noted between the hours of four and seven a.m., when the intensity of sleep is diminishing. This seems to indicate, to say the least, that we remember those dreams most clearly which occur in the transitional state between sleeping and waking.

The effects of dreams and their symbolism upon the waking life of man must be given proper consideration. "If," writes Pascal, "we dreamt every night the same thing it would perhaps affect us as powerfully as the objects which we perceive every day. And if an artisan were certain of dreaming every night for twelve hours that he was a king, I am convinced that he would be almost as happy as a king, who dreamt for twelve hours that he was an artisan. If we dreamt every night that we

were pursued by enemies and harassed by horrible phantoms, we should suffer almost as much as if that were true, and we should stand in as great dread of sleep, as we should of waking, had we real cause to apprehend these misfortunes... . It is only because dreams are different and inconsistent, that we can say, when we awake, that we have dreamt; for life is a dream a little less inconstant.” (See *Pensées*)

Although Pascal was writing on the level of his own meditations, there are actual cases which support his contention. Sir William Hamilton mentions an incident in which a young man, after a cataleptic attack, lived two complete careers—one while asleep, and the other while awake. After being asleep for about six minutes, he would speak distinctly, beginning each night where he had previously left off. By day, this man was the poor apprentice of a merchant: by night, he was a married man, the father of a family, a senator, and in affluent circumstances. There was no bridge between the two personalities. If told, during his waking hours, about his sleep existence, he declared it to be a dream. But when, during the dream state, he was reminded that he was merely the apprentice of a merchant, he declared this to be a dream. (See *Lectures on Metaphysics and Logic*)

Religious observances, such as the mystical contemplations and meditations of Eastern and Western saints, seek to release the human consciousness from its bondage to objectivity. The person sinks into a kind of reverie, thus releasing through his mental and emotional instruments a flow of internal energies, which usually express themselves through a pageantry of symbolism. In some instances, this symbolism is obviously diagrammatic, figurative, or emblematic, but in other cases, it is merely an exaggeration, intensification, or distortion of objective occurrences. Thus, we may first consider the dream as an interpretation by the psychic nature of those occurrences

which dominate the waking state. Such dreams originate in man's reaction to the stimuli of his waking conduct or the environment in which he functions as a waking being. We realize that although all persons inhabit one material world, each one subtly so colors this world that he experiences it as a personal and private universe. His acceptances and rejections, his opinions and doubts, and his concepts and conclusions, all condition the factual experiences of living and cause them to take on powerful overtones, either orderly or disorderly, as the case may be.

Dreams also release a quantity of subjective matter into the conscious life of a person. They reveal to him the patterns existing in his own soul and make available to his conscious attention a variety of impressions, acceptances and rejections, which have passed from the recollection of his conscious mind.

It is also reasonable to assume that certain cosmic pressures relating to the laws impelling existence, sustaining life, and molding it according to the essential purposes of Nature itself, may also be forced, through appropriate symbolism, upon man's objective awareness. If psychotic pressures rise within him, he may resist them during his waking state, but when the rational faculties are suspended, and the censorship of the will is temporarily removed, the psychic overload discharges into the personality and may or may not be remembered when the dreamer awakes. It is safe to say that the majority of dreams belong in these two groups, and it is an orderly procedure to clarify this point before assuming other elements or factors to exist.

The symbolism of dreams should be approached as we would examine the moral or ethical implications of a legend, fable, parable, or fairy tale. Most such stories originate in the dream state of folk consciousness, and descend to us because of an

internal validity which we accept even though we do not comprehend its meaning. It is probable that we dream to some degree at all times during sleep, because it is not safe to assume that any person is without certain sensitivities to external or internal pressures. Often, however, when the objective faculties regain their authority, dream sequences slowly fade from the mind and are not easily revived. This must cause us to conclude that the dream is a somnolent or receptive state, and that this reactive phenomenon is blocked by the direct action of physical consciousness.

The physical causes of dreams are numerous and varied, not the least of them being indigestion, as noted by Pliny. The body, overburdened with food and the responsibility of the digestive and assimilative functions, is unable to pass rapidly and easily into a state of repose. It therefore remains partly awake, and because of its own disturbed condition, the dream patterns are distorted to produce what is often called a nightmare.

The sensation of flying may result from autonomic nervous reflexes, and falling is another dream frequently of stomachic origin. We recognize the peculiar disturbance in the pit of the stomach which occurs when we descend rapidly in an elevator. This symbolism may easily be projected into the realm of sleep phenomena. There is the classical story of the man sleeping in a cold room, who dreamed that he was walking in an icy mountain stream and awoke to find that his bedclothing was disarranged and his feet had become uncovered. The question then arises, why did not this man simply dream that his feet were bare? This was probably due to the fact that rational explanations result from the coordinated testimonies of the senses. When this testimony is incomplete, or for the most part lacking, the feeling of cold is interpreted through association mechanisms derived from the storehouse of the subconscious.

In the dream state, certain relevant facts which depend upon sensory orientation are not available, and the intuitive and imaginative faculties grope for an explanation. The same occurs when, in a waking state, the essential elements of reasonable interpretation are obscure or inaccessible. While we are out walking, an acquaintance of many years standing ignores us on the street, hastening by without his usual salutations. Instinctively we wonder when and how we offended him. We assume that he is displeased, and consider the possibility that we are the victims of gossip. The occurrence can well be the cause of worry and concern, but it seldom occurs to us that nothing may be wrong that concerns us, and the other person may merely be preoccupied or passing through some crisis in his own life. This also reveals the common tendency of the imagination to react negatively, and to assume that a mystery must include some unpleasant element. We seldom imagine that others talk well about us behind our backs, or that obscure motives of those around us are honorable, unless positive proof is available.

It should also be noted that in most dream phenomena the memory sequences are absent or defective, and that the orientation bestowed by sensory factors is largely missing. Memory is important not so much because it preserves incidents, as because it reveals relationships between occurrences, bestowing order and perspective. Man recognizes the unreality of dreams largely because they are fragmentary, lacking in continuity, and deficient in consistency. He may be aware of this even as he dreams, although this is not the general rule. The words that come to mind in an association test are a good example of symbolic reaction as we note it in dream phenomena. Drawing completely upon available internal resources, the dreamer fashions an appropriate instrument to meet the need of his instinctual acceptance of a circumstance.

We have already mentioned *prodromic* dreams and the opinions concerning them by the great physicians of antiquity, principally Hippocrates and Galen. They arise from abnormalities of the body, which may or may not yet be known or apparent in a waking state. These dreams often appear to be prophetic, for they present symbolical warnings of disease or the faulty functions of organs. A man dreaming that he swallowed a large stone later learned that he had a tumor of the stomach. Another, swimming in an ocean of blood, later suffered a severe hemorrhage.

This same type of phenomenon probably explains the Asclepian rituals of Greece in which the sick were caused to sleep in the temple of the god of healing, who appeared to them in their dreams and diagnosed their ailments. The dreams of adolescents are often concerned with the biological and psychological changes taking place in their bodies and personalities.

While considering the dream as release of objective experience, it will be well to note cases in which the person involved was deficient in certain sensory powers and faculties. Those born deaf or blind reveal distinctly that the dream experience cannot escape from the boundaries of the sensory perceptions. Helen Keller was born with normal sensory perceptions, but lost sight and hearing in infancy. In her dreams, there are traces of her earlier visual contact with life, but they are weak and inconclusive. The blind usually have auditory dreams, in which they hear voices and have contact on the level of such sensory faculties as are unimpaired. They also have a kind of literary dream, in which they attempt to visualize circumstances from stories they have read or accounts they have heard. The dream always reveals, however, that the persons and places described have not been seen.

Dreams arising from a psychic overload are the more interesting and challenging. An almost infinite variety is recorded.

It is useless, on a scientific level, to standardize interpretations for such dreams. They are highly individual, and almost identical dreams may have different meanings for several persons. Only two courses of procedure are practical. One is to examine the individual by psychological tests or conferences, in order to discover the elements of his character which are causing the dreams, and the other is to examine the dream on an analytical level. The popular book of dream interpretations is of little practical value under these conditions.

Dreams arising from pressure originate in a fertile field, and may also exercise an excessive influence over the dreamer. He may find great difficulty in distinguishing between his dream-life and his waking state. He may also have a distinct tendency to polarize himself in his dreams and accept their validity over the testimony of his senses. The recurrent dream, which accompanies certain phases of schizophrenia, is a good example. It becomes additionally powerful because it is repeated, and it is difficult for the insecure mind to detach itself from the dream symbolism and reorganize its resources on a factual plane.

Archaic symbolism frequently occurs when subjective material is being released through dream patterns. Man is naturally sensitive to the archaic inasmuch as it is associated with the unfoldment of culture. Thus, these old symbols reveal themselves with a strange weight of authority. It is easy to assume that they are prophetic or revelational or divinely inspired. Thus, the dream and the true vision or mystical experience become hopelessly confused, as William James has pointed out. It also frequently happens that persons carrying a heavy psychic overload have already objectively turned to religion as a means of compensation or release. Under such conditions, the archaic dream symbols may be vividly religious, which further complicates their true interpretation. The mind associates religion and mystery, and the supernatural elements of religious belief seem

to sustain the possibility that the dreamer is passing through the modern equivalent of the primitive initiatory or vigil rites. Left to his own devices under such circumstances, he is hardly likely to assume that his experience is merely psychological. In fact, he does not wish to believe that such is the case. Many persons with religious dreams have discussed them with me, and in the majority of cases the experiences were psychological rather than mystical or psychical.

It has already been observed that there may be a basic alphabet of dream symbols or, perhaps more correctly, a glossary of dream terms. In other words, certain types of pressures take on recognizable, though sometimes complex groups of symbols through which to manifest. Also, dream symbols are accompanied by certain reactions. They are caused by moods and, in turn, they engender moods, and it is often the mood, rather than the symbol itself, which gives the key to interpretation. No clear line of demarcation is immediately possible, but dream symbolism, drawing upon environment, makes use of familiar things like trees, rivers, mountains, oceans, storms, fires, buildings, and even persons.

Dreams arising in the subconscious more frequently employ arbitrary devices such as geometrical forms, lights, stars, crosses, and other isolated emblems; or, the more extravagant will involve mythological monsters, giants, elementary spirits, the deities of ancient religions, and the complicated hieroglyphics of ancient sciences and arts. In some way, however, each symbol is traceable in its usage either to the individual psyche or the collective psychic nature of the group to which the person belongs. It is an available symbol, or he cannot use it, and it must be available in a certain context to express the intensity with which it is associated.

Dominant preoccupations of the mind are often carried into sleep. We often hear of persons who take their work to bed

with them, and, as a result, may rest poorly, or be subject to exaggerated dream experiences originating in mental anxiety or concern over impending matters of importance. Under such conditions, the person involved is usually able to explain and grasp the association factors, and is not overly perturbed. If, however, preoccupations are philosophical or religious, subsequent dream activity may be falsely interpreted. There can be no doubt that intense interests of the waking life are retained in the mind and are subjected to various intensifications and even distortions during slumber.

The classical case of Professor Hilprecht is often quoted or referred to in this context. While the professor was engaged in the translation of cuneiform inscriptions, he was concerned over the arrangements of certain texts. He was able to solve his dilemma as the result of a dream. He was suddenly aware that two parts of a tablet containing Babylonian writing fitted together to complete the text. He was not consciously aware of this possibility. An interesting phase of the dream was that an old Babylonian priest appeared to him and supplied the clue to the solution. It is reasonably certain that the old priest was a symbolical embodiment within the mind of the dreamer, but without some knowledge of mental phenomena, the experience could lead to broad psychic implications.

There is some difference of opinion as to the state of the mind during sleep. Leibnitz and Kant were inclined to believe that subjective mental phenomena are continuous. A simple example bearing upon this is the ability of the person to awaken at a predetermined time. It seems as though the mind stands guard over the sleeping period, and is able to stimulate the sensory functions by an intense impulse when occasion demands. This further implies that the mind is able to know clock-time or measure a precise interval without using the external faculties for this purpose. The mind also appears to possess the power to

differentiate between stimuli brought to it through the partly dormant sensory faculties. Thus the sleeper is not disturbed by a loud but familiar noise, but may be immediately awakened by a slight but unfamiliar sound. It is probable, therefore, that sounds, usual or unusual, may contribute to dream phenomena.

In the process of going to sleep, bodily functions do not necessarily enter slumber simultaneously, but in a certain succession which varies with different individuals and on different occasions. Even when all recognizable functions are dormant, the mind itself may continue a subjective and detached activity. Erasmus described an incident in which a man read aloud while asleep, but retained no memory of what he read. In cases of somnambulism, sleep does not prohibit bodily motion. We can mention the story of a postman who did a part of his daily round of delivering mail without error while asleep. London police are not permitted to allow derelicts to sleep on public benches, and it is known that these indigent persons are able to sleep while walking. They have a peculiar shuffling gait which they can maintain for hours.

The point of these remarks is that dreams may result from a pattern caused by the various degrees of sleep of different faculties at any given time. These faculties may convey incomplete stimuli to the mind and, conversely, the mind can be interpreted by these faculties in varying degrees of completeness or incompleteness. Thus, the very texture of a dream will vary in intensity, reasonableness, or clarity. The sleep phenomenon is not a simple problem which can be solved with a broad definition.

Many dreams are extensions of day-dreaming. The individual who is inclined to fall into moods and reveries, or to create imaginary circumstances, naturally retires from objective focus. The activity of the sensory faculties and powers is

therefore retarded or reduced, and visualization depends upon mental and emotional qualities. If this *retiral* becomes excessive, the personality is unbalanced, losing both the ability and the inclination to reorient on the level of the outward life. As it is a common habit to indulge in these moods after retiring, it is often difficult to distinguish when the consciously indulged reveries drift into the true dream state. If the mind continues active, the reveries will slowly assume symbolical intensity, further indicating the continuance of mental processes. Wishful thinking, then, often leads to dream fulfillment.

For purposes of interpretation, it is a good rule that dreams cannot be divided from the person who dreams them. All these types of sleep phenomena become valuable aids to the understanding of the internal life of the dreamer. Theoretically at least, dreamless sleep would imply the slumber of the mind itself. Let us remember that in the dream there is both a subject and an object. The sleeping person dreams of incidents, situations, or conditions, and is aware of them with the awareness of a spectator or even a participant. In sleep, he experiences himself as a conscious being, otherwise he could not record or react. Sleep cannot be without dream experiences, unless the dreamer himself—that is, the mind—is also asleep. We have no proof that the mind is subject to bodily fatigue, or that the emotions require nightly repose.

Even in dreamless sleep, therefore, all that can be safely inferred is that the sensory and motive structures are in complete repose. This would mean that mental and emotional activity would remain, on their own levels, and not be interpreted by any of the normal faculties.

If, as some assume, dreams are the result of certain intensities and pressures, they would naturally become more frequent and more vivid if these intensities and pressures are deprived of normal outlets in the waking state. To a degree, therefore, the

dream is a safety valve. It is a highly conditioned activity which permits the release of inhibitions through appropriate symbolical designs. The individual may feel exhilarated or depressed in his dreams; he may find himself in danger, and may even awake fatigued by his dream experience. By such thinking, only the person without intensities and pressures would be free from dreams. Even this might not be entirely true, however, as the well-integrated individual has positive plans and purposes which might also be carried into sleep and create dream symbols. In such cases, however, it is probable that the symbolism would be more pleasant, and less insistent in its demands for acceptance.

There is a type of dreams or related experiences which arises from entoptic stimuli. These stimuli originate within the eyeball and, due to the circulation in the retina, affect visual sensation. In other words, the eye does not pass immediately into complete repose, but retains certain visual images which gradually lose their proper boundaries and proportions, resulting in distorted forms which appear to be seen independently or against the fading background of normal environment. To this class belong what are called "faces in the dark," most likely to be seen in the transition between waking and sleeping early in the night. These retinal images may be deformed by psychological pressure in cases of neurosis, so that they become terrible or horrifying.

A similar situation can also arise in the auditory system, causing the victim to hear voices or a constant prattle of semi-incoherent words and sounds. These may be likened to the dreams and nightmares of the separate sensory instruments, but seldom exist to an important degree unless the total personality is under neurotic pressure.

As day-dreaming drifts into sleep phenomena, so pressureful dreams may also extend their influence into the subsequent

waking state of the individual. He can function in a semi-dream condition due to an incomplete objective orientation. This results in two noticeable occurrences. The person takes his dreams too seriously and attempts to impose them upon his waking conduct, or else he fails to notice or accept the natural boundaries of the dream state and is unaware that he is continuing to live in a kind of semi-waking fantasy. Unusual situations, under such conditions, may permit the dream pattern to become dominant during waking hours. This is usually unfortunate, and results in the loss of a sense of reality. Due to the nature of this pressure, its symbolism is difficult to combat, and is sometimes accepted without any censorship by the reasoning faculties.

Most persons are able to be honest with others more easily than with themselves. This is especially true in dream interpretation. The instinct is protective, and only on rare occasions do we find willingness to accept the dream as a symbol of personality deficiency or incompleteness. There is also a marked pre-disposition to conceal, even from oneself, the deep and underlying causes of temperamental insecurity. Because of their abstract structures, symbols are often susceptible of numerous interpretations. We may reject their real meaning in favor of some explanation more flattering to ourselves. The more completely the individual becomes locked in some neurotic pattern, the less able he is to face the valid meaning of his own dreams. For this reason, he may require analysis and counseling.

We have already mentioned the Babylonian priest, and it is appropriate to explore this symbolism a little further. Many persons develop a "teacher-image" within themselves. Musicians and artists have done so, and it would be inevitable that this image would be clothed in the proper garb for our dominant intellectual concern.

On the emotional level, we may also have a romantic personal image—the handsome hero or beautiful heroine—who embodies certain requirements of our own psychic nature. In India, for example, the young disciple of some venerated master may dream that his master appears to him in sleep, favoring him with guidance and instruction. It should always be remembered that such images are conceptual; that is, they are the dreamer's concept of such a teacher or exceptional person. Thus, the image serves as a catalyzing agent, and to it we gradually transfer the degree of our own understanding.

Our own mental energies ensoul the image, which performs the actions and speaks the words which we bestow, command, or require. These internal teacher-images never contradict us, nor do they ever possess a degree of knowledge beyond our own subjective capacity. They do, however, as in the case of Dr. Hilprecht's dream, make available a quantity of data which has been recorded, but not consciously retained. Due to the residual elements of the ego, which remain available in sleep, the teacher-image usually flatters us or implies that we have been selected for some vast project or world-shaking revelation. This is what we have secretly desired, and are eager to believe. The result may be a tragic career.

The obstacles and frustrations so frequent in the lives of persons of unusual intensity may also result in the gradual forming of an adversary-image. This is the villain in man's sleep drama. As in all approved legends, this adversary must ultimately be discomfited. This type of image may clothe itself in the familiar guise of some person with whom we have had difficulty or whom we suspect to have evil intentions against us.

This explains numerous cases of so-called obsession, which are due to obsession by an image, and not by the person whom the image resembles. Such elements being lacking, the adversary-image may assume classical proportions, or exhaust its powers

through a sequence of adverse situations typical of resistance, retaliation, or obstacle hazards. Cases have been known where suicide has resulted from the efforts of an unbalanced person to destroy an adversary-image within himself.

It has also been noted that in remembering dreams, certain parts of the account are broken and incomplete. Sometimes this is due to a defense mechanism which causes the narrator to block out material bearing upon a particularly sensitive or distasteful area of symbolism. He does not do this consciously, but is unable to resist the pressure which causes the blocking. In such instances, however, there will be further dreaming and other opportunities to estimate these lapses.

It is also noteworthy that in many dreams about persons, faces are indistinct. This is probably due to the fact that the objective life does not have a distinct personality which it can associate with a certain dream pattern. A good example is the dream that results from the reading of a book. The individual has associated himself with a prominent character whom he has come to know only by word-description. As his visual faculties have not contributed, he can adapt the symbolism of the events, but cannot distinguish with clarity the faces of the dream-persons.

Now let us explore a comparatively frequent dream experience. The sleeper sees himself walking in a muddy place. The mud is deep and soft, and retards progress. The dreamer advances with difficulty, but must go on because he is carrying an important message to an unknown person. Anyone can have this dream, but its meaning can be highly personal. Obviously it represents an inhibiting situation. The man whose business is in a confused state so that he is unable to advance his primary purpose can be "bogged down" even though he may feel intense responsibility to "deliver the goods". The frustrated housewife trying to convey to her husband a vital message about her own

psychological needs may also be “bogged down”. So may the child who is badly adjusted in school, but who desires deeply to prove scholastic ability. The author may be “bogged down” with his book, the older person in his economic limitations. In any event, the dream implies the acceptance of the circumstance of restraint, and the recognition that progress is a slow and difficult journey.

There may well be also a symbolism derived from the folk-consciousness which man has inherited with his pattern of civilization. In Sanchoniathon’s Phoenician History, there is a description of the primordial state of the universe. This ancient author said that all life came out of mud, or a primal ooze, called the *ilis*, which to him represented chaos. Chaos, in turn, represents absolute subjectivity, the unknown and unknowable material which engenders cosmos, or the orderly sequence of existence. Thus, mud can represent involvement in the unconscious, or the inability of the individual to free himself from the archaic, the primitive, or the unorganized mass of his own undeveloped potential.

To walk in mud, therefore, is to be inhibited by lack of internal integration or by the subconscious recognition of inherent weakness. To carry the message means to fulfill the obligations to the self. The unknown recipient of the message, in this case, is the total self, which the experience is attempting to reach in an effort to explain its own condition. Thus we learn that interpretation breaks into levels, of which one may be of sovereign importance, and another may be of immediate significance.

We have already mentioned that dreams of flying may originate from certain changes in bodily circulation, but this does not exhaust the subject. For a person long held in bondage, for one reason or another, the dream of flying is quite understandable. It is a symbolic statement of an overwhelming desire for

freedom, but there are other instances in which the elements are more subtle.

Fantasy is always involved in the escape from reality and this, in turn, is associated with release from limiting situations. Flying can be a dream of the misunderstood or unappreciated person, whose normal intentions are locked by circumstances.

It can also mean an intensity dream in which the internal pressures are so great that, like dance symbolism, a complete abandon is implied. The individual may also be "up in the air", not knowing what course to pursue or what decision to make. There may be the implication of limitation from obligation or escape from responsibility. There is an airy sprite in each one of us, which is associated with childhood and the instinct to retreat from the implications of maturity.

Most frequently the dreamer seems to skim over landscape only a few feet above the tops of trees and houses; perhaps he is trying to "skim over" facts which he finds objectionable. As levitation is contrary to man's normal obedience to the law of gravity, flying dreams frequently accompany internal rebellion, lack of social adjustment, and impatience against the slow motion of physical events. Directionless flight may also bear witness to certain space movements of the psyche, which is a winged being, according to old Greek fables. Thus, the psyche is recognized as possessing supernormal powers and free movement in the subjective atmosphere.

To dream of the dead, of graveyards, of haunted houses, or funerals, may be to reveal another group of psychic patterns. Death is conveniently a figure of termination, of ending, or of completion. It means that the individual has either outgrown a previous state and left a dead self behind, or else finds himself in a situation from which he can experience no effectual release. The past is locked in every person, either in his own

subconscious nature or, relating to more immediate things, in his conscious memory.

Possession by the dead, or the interference of the dead in the affairs of the living, suggests the past moving in upon the present and overshadowing the future. The human mind can become a haunted house, and so also can the internal psychic life of the person lacking integration, and victimized by his own intensities.

Ghosts are psychological shadows which may rise from associational mechanisms. They are harmless unless the individual, refusing to forgive and forget, clings desperately to his own misfortunes and refuses to let the dead die.

Sometimes the individual sees himself dying, surrounded by his friends and relatives. Very often this occurrence invokes a feeling of intense satisfaction. It is the dramatic exit of a person who feels himself misunderstood, neglected, or undervalued. It is the triumphant opportunity for a magnificent exit. To dream that we are the principal person in an elaborate funeral, is another way of saying that we will be appreciated after we are gone. This may also be a compensation for an existence that has been colorless or without distinguishing achievements.

Very often, dreams involve unusual natural phenomena, such as tidal waves, storms, earthquakes, and fires. These generally group together in their symbolism under the heading of "irresistible forces", which the dreamer considers beyond his control. He may be drowned in a sea of circumstances, or tossed about on an ocean of unwelcome events. He may feel psychological ground slip out from under his feet, or his life pattern consumed by a holocaust of fire. Certainly there is great fear in these dreams—great sense of insecurity. In himself, the dreamer has not learned to love and trust the universe in which he lives. He regards providence as an enemy rather than as a benefactor, and is experiencing his own lack of control over the

variety of impulses, instincts, and attitudes which are flowing out of his own psychic center.

Here also, there may be a valid relationship between the dream and immediate experience. The great depression of 1929 was like an economic tidal wave sweeping away the security of countless persons. Even a slight earthquake within the temperament can shake down the house of cards a man may build in the advancement of his career. It should always be remembered that these dreams do not reveal literal facts, but symbolic truths. They are bound intimately with the expectancies and acceptances of the dreamer. They testify to the weakness of the person, and not to the strength of the pressures which affect him.

Among the most remarkable dreams are those which involve *composita*; that is, creatures which can have no existence in the material world, such as dragons, griffins, winged serpents, centaurs, mermaids and the like. These are either derived from archaic sources, or else represent compounds of symbolic factors existing within the psychic entity. Usually such symbols occur in a context which is also traceable in mythology. The dragon-slayer is always the hero-self, victorious over ignorance, darkness, evil, or a particular emergency. Grotesque forms indicate distorted attitudes, confusion, disorientation, or instability. Sometimes such dreams indicate the lowering of the psychological threshold and a reversion to animism.

In most cases, the outcome of the dream is important, and the omens are good if in the end virtue and the hero triumph. If the dreams are inconclusive or imply final disaster, they warn the individual that he is in need of objectification and self-discipline. Again the mood which accompanies the dream is most important, for under certain conditions, archaic symbols may have a positive validity. In such cases, however, a certain

implication accompanies them, and provides a clue to their interpretation.

Religious dreams offer a wide diversity of symbolism. It is perfectly proper and right that the normal person should have deep and strong religious convictions, but these become detrimental when they begin to release their shadowy opposite—a world of demoniacal forces. A person who dreams that he is suffering for his religion may be telling us no more than that he is willing to die for his opinions. Religious symbolism is often a transference of a kind of egoistic stubbornness. Whatever we believe intensely on any subject takes on an appearance of sacredness. This is one of the reasons why we are so loath to resist our own attitudes, whether they are good or bad.

A materialist may have a religious dream, or a dream involving religious symbols, because in a strange way, his materialism has assumed religious importance, as the directing power of his life. After the fall of the Romanoff dynasty in Russia, the icons of the saints vanished from most public shrines, and in their places were pictures of Lenin and Stalin. Worship remained, however, for the most part undisturbed. The faces changed, but man's instinct to venerate still required expression.

Other types of religious dreams may reveal piety or indicate that, in the conscious life, the individual is predisposed to intense religious visualization. This carries over into sleep, and the images become animated.

There is a noticeable unfortunate condition that sometimes arises in this department. Very often religious dreams, over a period of time, slowly, but remorselessly, change. By degrees, their beauty fades, and a malignant power comes through in their place. This is associated with the increase of fanaticism; the worshipper is no longer at peace with himself; he has become aggressively theological, striving desperately to impose his

own convictions upon others. As he meets resistance and disillusionment, his intensities increase, until finally the religious insight which should inspire him becomes a heavy and terrible burden upon his spirit. This often happens when the individual attempts a way of religious living or thinking which is beyond his normal understanding and ability to practice with moderation and integrity. If he cannot live with what he believes, conscience mechanisms will soon disturb his rest.

Prophetic dreams are essentially different from those which originate within the personality itself. In some cases, they seem to indicate a dimension of consciousness as yet comparatively unexplored. This is true of events about which the dreamer himself can have no preconception or which cannot arise from his own experience—either subjective or objective. These include foreknowledge of disaster, earthquakes, wars, and accidents—especially those affecting other persons or remote places.

There is another type of prophetic dream, however, such as that mentioned in the Bible as having occurred to Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon. The dream was highly symbolical, and could well have originated in the King's conscience, for he was quite aware of the corruptions which prevailed, and even in his waking state might have pondered the probability of divine retribution. We are constantly envisioning the future as the fulfillment of present actions, and are instinctively fearful that our individual and collective delinquencies open us to various punishments.

Dreams laden with prophetic import, or of unusual intensity, may often lead to historical consequences. The Duke of Wellington was inspired to restore the Alhambra in Spain as the result of a dream in which he saw this beautiful Moorish palace slowly crumbling and disintegrating.

As the result of a dream, the late President Roosevelt declared that it was imperative to build a new airport to serve the city of

Washington, D. C. His sleep had been disturbed by a scene of a terrible accident due to the inadequacy of the facilities then existing.

In ancient times, most rulers of countries maintained dream interpreters, whose opinions strongly influenced the policies of state. The dream of Pilate's wife is said to have caused him to wash his hands at the trial of Jesus and to say, "I am innocent of the blood of this just person." Cornelia, the wife of Caesar, received a horrible premonition of his assassination, and tried without avail to prevent him from attending the fatal meeting of the Roman Senate.

One of the most interesting dream experiences is associated with the life of John Bunyan, the English religious writer. It is said that he was inspired by a dream to write *Pilgrim's Progress* in 1675, while imprisoned in one of the old jails of London. This circumstance is attested to by the frontispiece of the first edition of his book, which is perhaps the only formal portrait of a sleeping author. The story is therefore of profound psychological interest, and the basic nature of the dream images and their adventures may account for the almost incredible popularity of the work. The first edition of *Pilgrim's Progress* is now among the world's most valuable books. Nearly all copies were literally read to pieces.

Premonitions of death are often revealed through dream symbolism, but the interpreter must be cautious because of the very nature of death itself. Any major change in man's total psychic integration is a form of transition. Man dies away from that which he discards, outgrows, or relinquishes in favor of a different or more advanced state of being. It is true, however, to refer again to the *prodromic* type of dream, that the body may register the fact of death due to disease or disorder, before the actual incident occurs.

It is also quite possible for a person studying dream phenomena to become fearful of this group of symbols and project these fears into sleep, thus frightening himself needlessly. For this reason, we will limit our discussion to an outstanding historical example of this type of premonition. The night before his assassination, Abraham Lincoln dreamed that he was alone in a boat without oars or rudder, helpless in a boundless ocean. He reported this dream to his cabinet, and told them that some unexpected occurrence would soon take place.

Many dreams are interrupted by the untimely waking of the sleeping person. Under such conditions, the timing is important, and on this subject, little has been written. Dreams frequently end at a critical moment—either good or bad. Sometimes waking is a blessed relief, and other times a frustrating interruption to a delightful experience. The stimuli of an excessive dream may react upon objective consciousness, becoming so disturbing that the person awakes. It seems, also, that there is a tendency of the dreamer to resent experiences of finality. In the dream of drowning, for example, it is most unusual for the sleeping person to experience his own death, because this is contrary to his instinctive acceptance of the deathless state of his own psyche. Drowning may represent an external situation which is closing in upon the self and threatening its survival. It may also imply that the ego is threatened with immersion in its own subconscious or unconscious psychic life. In either case, the dreamer awakes at the critical moment. Even this is symbolical, for it tells him that he must re-polarize on the level of factuality. Thus, waking represents restoration of reality; the triumph of the objective being over its own illusionary state. To awake implies the recognition that fantasy must be conquered by an exertion of the conscious will.

A word of warning for those who like to interpret the dreams of their friends. Nearly all symbols are susceptible of several

meanings, and our instinctive estimations of the characters of others often cause us to blend our explanations with what we regard as useful moral advice, admonition or persuasion. We want to teach our friends something, and use their dream adventures as a convenient means. Thus, our conclusions may be biased to the same degree as when we seek to interpret our own dreams. The result is more confusing than helpful. Many persons have found that if they will honestly examine their dream experiences with an open and receptive mind, the true meaning will be revealed to them, sometimes through further dreams.

Occasionally in life we have what are called *archetypal dreams*. These can usually be identified by their clarity and intensity and the high quality of their import. The same dream may be repeated on rare occasions over a long period of years, and it is always accompanied by a powerful impression of significance. These dreams represent a motion of the psychic archetype or total psychic being, impressing itself upon the objective faculties. They are directive, and usually indicate a course of action or an unfoldment of character required or demanded by the internal nature. For example, a man dreamed that he was standing at night on a star-lit plain. Slowly, a great tower rose from the earth, bearing on its top a beacon light similar to those in lighthouses. He felt the importance of the dream, which repeated almost exactly nine years later. Gradually, the instinct toward religion strengthened in this man, and he became an influential clergyman, with a large and important ministry. Later in life he often said that this dream was his call to a spiritual work. Strangely enough, a biographer, writing of this man, said that his life was a tower of strength and light. Dreams of this kind are so forceful that they gradually and subtly move the personality toward their fulfillment.

It may be interesting to note that each person is really a group of personalities bound together by a dominant integration of

characteristics. Each of us is a kind of dramatic presentation with a full cast of characters, including the hero, the heroine, the villain, and a number of smaller roles. These fragments of our total psychic being often appear in dreams under the guise of appropriate figures. Thus, in each of us is a venerable elder, who embodies our paternal or maternal instinct. There may also be the dignified statesman or economist, hiding our ambitions or desires for worldly fame. There is also a "gay blade", the typical Don Juan, under which our personal emotional intensities find an appropriate guise. Then there is the small child, combining willfulness and eternal curiosity. In sleep, these phantom selves take on a fanciful integration and appear to have separate and complete existences. An analysis of these thought and emotion forms will help us to understand the pressures which often cause conflict on the objective plane. The seven ages of man live in him continuously, for as one part of his nature appears mature, another part reveals its immaturity.

In objective living, we bind these parts together into a compound, and are confronted with a pattern of personality. We often wonder why our friends and acquaintances reveal so many inconsistencies in their conduct. We cannot call upon any of the separate faculties and powers of our natures for more maturity than they possess. The shrewd businessman is easily deceived in his personal relationships; the great scholar is ignorant in matters of health; the doting parent is simultaneously reasonable and unreasonable.

Contrary to popular belief, specialization of learning does not contribute to a well-balanced pattern of living. When specialization, due either to the pressure of circumstances or natural inclination, endangers integration, this is often brought to our attention through dream symbolism. There is also a class of dreams which reveals the pressure of habits, and many habitual practices are symbolical of escape or defense.

The broader and fuller the objective life of the person, the less dream pressures he is likely to experience. In many lives, avocational outlets fulfill the need for a certain degree of fantasy. Many avocations cannot be regarded as practical in the ordinary sense of the word. They are expenses rather than profits, and they often appear childish or inconsequential to others. The selection of a hobby, however, is highly auto-corrective. It is an escape from reality or from the pressures of a principal occupation, and often provides a means of culturing and maturing the subordinate parts of the personality. It may be said that it shares with daydreaming in releasing tension, and the absence of such an outlet distinguishes most neurotics. Where there is no waking release, sleep phenomena increase proportionately.

It may be useful to distinguish, at least briefly, the essential difference between a dream and a vision. In practice, this distinction is almost impossible without a deep knowledge of the particular experience and the degree of psychic integration present in such cases. A vision is an occurrence arising within the deepest part of the psychic nature. It results from a direct apperception of internal values, and is usually marked by the absence of the personality equation. It is neither pressureful in itself, nor does it lead to confusion in the outer life. A true vision is nearly always a total picture, including the obvious and inevitable interpretation of its own meaning. We may ask for help in the interpretation of a dream, but not in the interpretation of a vision. It bears its own authority within it, and partakes of what is called the mystical experience. There is a simultaneous imparting of picture and content, followed by an appropriate enlargement of understanding. Visions are usually concerned with spiritual reality or with the archetypal requirements of consciousness. The vision is a revelation of consciousness, whereas the dream is a representation to us of mental and

emotional acceptances or rejections. The vision bears witness to an internal relaxation, an opening of powers and faculties, whereas the dream usually reveals a closing or limiting of our psychic resources.

The degree of personal participation in dreams is also significant as indicative of our involvement in pressure symbolism. Usually the dreamer maintains his own point of view—at least to a degree. He moves through situations or witnesses them. If he participates in the dream, he no longer dominates the situation which it symbolizes. His central orientation is threatened, and this should give him cause for some concern. Occasionally, parts of his own nature may be represented under animal symbolism, much as in the fables of Aesop. Animals usually signify subordinate parts of the psychic nature which lack human maturity. A person dreams that he is going to a certain place, but there is a lion in the road which interferes with his progress. This lordly beast may represent authority or a dominant fixation of the mind which is powerful enough to interfere with the primary objectives of character. Wild animals may typify uncontrolled excesses and emotions, and domestic creatures, intensities which have been tamed and are useful to the advancement of personal integration.

Many Christian people have derived much of their psychological symbolism from the New Testament. Thus, Christ walking on the water and quelling the storm is associated with the instinct for faith, which gives man the power to walk untroubled on a stormy sea of circumstances. Dreams of sacred persons interceding or protecting the dreamer remind him of the divine potential within himself which can be superior to any negative condition that may arise.

Pleasant dreams are always enjoyable, but should not be excessive without due thought. The nature of the pleasures involved testifies to the maturity or immaturity of the person.

Also, they are sometimes an effort to compensate for lack of happiness in the objective life. They lure the dreamer into an imaginary paradise which he probably would not be seeking if his personality were well adjusted. They may even impel a conviction that the person desires to escape responsibilities in the mortal sphere.

There is also another interesting possibility. New discoveries, new thoughts that come to the mind, new realization of universal wisdom or providential goodness, may cause in the individual a kind of internal exhilaration productive of symbolic dreams. An ax-alcoholic who had successfully conquered his craving for alcohol and found a new universe of opportunities opening before him, had a dream of standing in a desert place which suddenly blossomed forth with an infinite variety of colorful flowers. This was a dream of stated achievement, including a new sense of internal wellbeing and promising the transformation of a barren life into a rich opportunity for usefulness and success. Conversely, to see things wither or die, is to be faced with symbolism of disillusionment, discouragement, or fatigue.

In dreams, children are often the psychic extensions of ourselves. It is a natural human tendency, in the waking state, to daydream about the future of our sons and daughters. We are inclined to see them not as separate persons, but as potential instruments for the fulfillment of our convictions, aspirations, and ambitions. They may also signify the undeveloped parts of our psychic compound over which we exercise a parental directive. When we dream of tragedies to children, we may be revealing reverses to our secret hopes and dreams. There is some part of our own emotional quotient which is bruised or thwarted.

To give birth to a child in a dream, implies the release of psychic creativity, or the recognition of fulfillment. To care for

children not your own, often conveys humanitarian instinct or an outlet for mental or emotional barrenness. The more we study these problems, the more convinced we become that we should interpret our waking instincts in the same way that we interpret our dreams. With every decision we make, every time we react to outer circumstance, we are revealing inner content.

A sudden cycle of vivid dreams should cause the individual to examine his way of life, to discover, if possible, why he should experience these occurrences. If, with a little research, he discovers that he has been under unusual tension, that his business affairs have become confused or disordered, his personal life disrupted, or his health undermined by exertion or excess, he may safely assume that these unnatural and dangerous occurrences are being brought to his conscious attention because of the damage they are causing within himself. Failing to make such an analysis, he loses the direct value of the significant dream of his own life.

It becomes obvious that any approach to the understanding of our own dreams or the dreams of others must be thoughtful and cautious. It must take all factors into consideration, and not compound an illusion by our own wishful thinking. We must realize that a dream is always an element in a related pattern, and useful dream interpretation rests on an examination and understanding of this pattern. A thoughtful and moderate approach to the subject can contribute to man's victory over self and circumstance.



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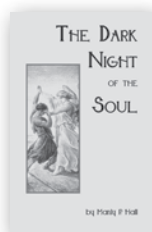


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Manly P. Hall founded the Philosophical Research Society, Inc., a non-profit organization in 1934, dedicated to the dissemination of useful knowledge in the fields of philosophy, comparative religion, and psychology. In his long career, spanning more than seventy years of dynamic public activity, Mr. Hall delivered over 8000 lectures in the United States and abroad, authored over 150 books and essays, and wrote countless magazine articles.

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