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Dream-based diagnosis of the psyche

1. Beginnings of the psychotherapeutic analysis and interpretation of dreams – Freud's psychoanalysis

1.1. Scientific foundations of psychoanalysis

Sigmund Freud is the creator of the psychoanalysis and interpretation of dreams and a forefather of psychotherapy. When developing the theory of the treatment of neuroses, the Austrian neurologist concluded that their source lies in the unconscious. He considered dreams the "royal way" to this realm (Freud 1952).

Psychoanalysis was based on doctrines of the 19th century science (Hobson, McCarley 1977). Freud assumed, inter alia, that the body is a complex system drawing energy from the world through nourishment and returning it back to the environment via performed actions. He also believed, following his contemporary neurophysiology, in the mind/body isomorphism, assuming that the mind and the body are one substance taking different forms. When constructing his theory, he additionally used the principles of energy conservation. On this basis, he assumed that energy does not vanish, but only changes form. In view of the described assumptions, Freud's concept of the human psyche is simultaneously mechanistic and deterministic (Hall, Lindzey, Campbell 1998). Hence, the constant dispute with Freud's classical psychoanalysis in academic papers is a considerable misunderstanding, since its rudiments have been obsolete for many years now.

The theoretical foundations adopted by Freud resulted in the following consequences for psychoanalysis:
1. the assumption that the energy used by the body and the energy moving the mind are the same type of energy originating from nourishment;
2. the assumption that the energy "annexed" by the psyche must find its outlet (the energy conservation principle provides that it cannot simply disappear).

I shall return to these threads further on.

1.2. The structural model of the human mind and dreams

Contemporary researchers noticed that descriptions of the human psyche according to Freud can be divided into five different meta-theories (Drat-Ruszczak

2000). One of them assumes a division of the psyche into three structures: the id, the ego and the superego.

The id ("it") is a reservoir of mental energy. It is there that the energy of the body is transformed into mental energy. The id is the place of origin of the two basic types of mental energy that need to be discharged: the libido (creative, affiliative, sexual energy) and the destrudo (energy of destruction, separation, and alienation) (Drozdowski, Kokoszka 1993). The id's task is to satisfy the body's needs in their most primary form. If this is impossible in the physical world, the id performs an imaginary satisfaction of needs by hallucinating its experience (Hall, Lindzey, Campbell 1998). For example, a starving person without access to food daydreams of eating (Freud 2012). In this way, he/she "satisfies" the need in the only accessible way (Hall, Lindzey, Campbell 1998). The id is entirely unconscious.

The super-ego ("super-self") contains norms the individual acquired in the course of the socialization process. It is unreflective and acts automatically. People can become aware of a part of their super-ego.

The ego ("self") is an organisation controlling the entire human psyche. It is partly in the conscious, and party in the unconscious. Its main task is to reconcile the id's needs with the requirements of reality and the standards of the super-ego. It is important not to connect the ego with self-awareness and self-identity. These constructs are dealt with to a larger extent by the more contemporary schools of psychoanalysis such as the psychology of the self (cf. Hall, Lindzey, Campbell 1998).

As results from the above, dreams are born from the id – just like every other mental act. However, a major role in their creation is also played by the censorship related to the superego (Freud 2012).

1.3. Dreamwork

In Freud's concept, dreams are the guardians of peaceful sleep. The id's needs outside sleep are controlled by the ego and the superego. During one's sleep, the two "higher" instances become weakened and the id has a much greater influence (Freud 2012). According to Freud, it demands during sleep that its needs be satisfied and a dream is the aforementioned hallucinated satisfaction of a need (Freud 1952, 2012). However, why is this satisfaction often so non-obvious? Freud believes that dreams in many cases are to satisfy socially-unaccepted impulses – sexual or aggressive ones. A dream must hide the satisfaction of such impulses from the sleeping person so that the strong emotions related to the non-accepted wish do not break the undisturbed relaxation. This happens via the dreamwork, in which Freud identifies the following mechanisms:

–   condensation – aimed at the compression of many threads or items into one (Vedfelt 1999). For example, a dreaming person may see in their dream an unknown little boy, feeling that they are both their uncle and father. Condensation – apart from its economic function – also conceals some meanings by mixing them;

- dramatisation – consists in giving the dream a dramatic form, "clothing" desires, impulses and thoughts in the form of events;
- displacement – is a change of accent during a dream. It is to displace the pressure of the dream from socially unacceptable contents so that they remain even more illegible. If – in consistence with Freud's concept – a given person would dream of sex, then, through censorship, not only would sex be replaced with some other rhythmical action, such as walking up a ladder (cf. Freud 2012), but possibly the accent would be shifted from walking up the ladder to something else – for example the person would see a dragon flying towards them, and the climbing itself would not be as important;
- secondary revision – according to Freud, this mechanism is not present in all dreams. Its task is to provide a topic for the entire dream and combine its scenes so that they create one "sound" whole.

The entire dreamwork transforms the concealed content (the real content of processes of the human psyche when we sleep) into an open content – not necessarily a version which is logical and rational, but one that is socially-acceptable and does not awake the sleeper.

1.4. Summary and conclusions

Summing up – Freud believed that dreams are guardians of the restful sleep of the man troubled by the constant desires of the insatiable id. They fulfil their function through a hallucinated satisfaction of the desires and – if these are socially unacceptable – through concealing them from the dreamer via dreamwork.

Currently, the value of Freud's dream theory is mainly historical. The theory was developed in other socio-psychological conditions, on the basis of obsolete theories from the area of the natural sciences. Its value in the determination of the real properties of the human psyche is scant and not proved (Hall, Lindzey, Campbell 1998).

2. Further development of psychoanalytical concepts of the dream

2.1. Jung's analytical psychology

One of the most developed theories of the interpretation of dreams was created by Carl Gustav Jung, a student of Freud's. The Austrian psychiatrist was one of the first persons who broke with Freud. The offshoot developed by Jung is referred to as analytical psychology (Hall, Lindzey, Campbell 1998).

2.1.1. Structure of the psyche according to Jung

Carl Gustav Jung believed that the human psyche contains biological elements, common to all people, which result from the history of the species (Dudek

2007; Jung 1968). He called them archetypes. Apart from them, there exists a part of the mind marking each particular individual, but the psychologist devoted less attention to this. The archetypes that can be most often observed in people's daily functioning or in dreams are the Shadow, the Persona, the Anima, and the Animus.

According to Jung, the Persona is a mechanism resulting from evolution, which was developed since in society people can never be "themselves" (Jung 1981). The father of analytical psychology believed that the compulsion of the repeatable putting on of "masks" for entire generations caused them, by way of evolution, to become an element of our natural endowment. In our daily life, the Persona manifests itself in behaviour and thoughts that accompany us during the presence of others, although they would be alien to us when alone. In dreams, the Persona can be featured symbolically as a mask, fancy dress, "being somebody else" (not oneself), etc.

The Shadow is tantamount to animal drives and the socially unaccepted mental contents with which we do not identify ourselves. It is often dark, aggressive or even demonical and manifests in dreams in this way – as persons, animals or supernatural beings that are dangerous to the dreamer (Dudek 2007; Vedfelt 1999). In behaviour, it manifests itself as the unwanted and repressed pursuits or thoughts one is ashamed of as soon as they are thought.

The Animus / the Anima are gender archetypes. According to Jung, healthy men identify themselves with their Animus, while their Anima remains in the unconscious; healthy women identify themselves with the Anima, and the Animus is unconscious. Outside of dreams, these archetypes manifest themselves accordingly by behaviours typical for men (decidedness, aggression, expansiveness) and women (submissiveness, agreeableness, caring attitude). It should be stressed that Jung created his theory on the basis of various works of culture, philosophy, and texts related to magic and alchemy (Hall, Lindzey, Campbell 1998). Thus, it does not have to remain consistent with the findings of social psychology and sociology (in particular ones following the gender approach) indicating negative results of stereotyping (cf. Wojciszke 2012).

The Self is another important archetype – although it is rarely noticed in dreams and behaviour. According to Jung, it is the archetype of the human completeness every soul strives to attain. This goal is implemented through the process of individuation (Dudek 2007; Jung 1980; Vedfelt 1999). Individuation starts for good at about the fiftieth year of life. It is then that people begin to dream archetypical dreams picturing the human road to the achievement of a full life.

2.1.2. Principles of the interpretation of dreams

Jung codified the principles of dream interpretation as a part of analytical psychology (Vedfelt 1999). Dreams should be perceived as Greek dramas. Dreams are composed of:
1. exposition, i.e. time, place, and participants of the dream;
2. complication, i.e. development of action;

3. climax – the culmination point involving either a positive solution or a catastrophe;
4. lysis – the end of a dream and the completion of its action.

Exposition and complication present the problem being the topic of the dream, while climax and lysis indicate possibilities for navigating through the described problem and suggest ways in which it can be solved.

According to Jung, dreams may have a reductive and a prospective aspect. The former refers to the past and interpretation through these lenses is aimed at identifying which past events determined the dream. The prospective aspect, which was of much more interest to the father of analytical psychology himself, is directed towards the future. It indicates the present forces in the human being, which try to change his/her situation.

For the effective interpretation of dreams, Jung recommended the analysis of their context. For this purpose, he used the method of association, with a given element of the dream or its amplification.

The association method consists in the simple saying of what a given person associates with an element of a dream standing in the centre of the analyst's interest, whereas the amplification method consists in the creation of a symbolic context for the dream element in question – searching for symbols connected with the individual's own experience, cultural life, as well as the general human context – one that is archetypical (cf. Vedfelt 1999).

An important constituent of a good interpretation of a dream also included a determination whether the persons present in the dream are elements of the dreamer's personality (a subjective plan) or the picturing of real persons from one's environment (an objective plan).

Objective interpretation is normally used when the person in the dream is a significant individual for the dreamer. It is similar with the persons who are not necessarily important, but the relationship with whom is very emotional. The same principle is most often applied to persons who appear in the dream very clearly and in detail.

When the person from the dream is not very significant or not at all related to the dreamer, subjective interpretation is applied. It is also used when the protagonist is distorted or changed. These principles are formed generally and can be broken if the other elements of the context indicate a different type of interpretation.

The ultimate checking of the dream interpretation is its verification. Jung suggests several methods by which this can be performed. First of all, dreams should be interpreted in series, not individually. If subsequent dreams dreamt within a short time confirm the interpretation, it is sound. If not, a new framework should be created to connect all the dreams in the series (Dudek 2007; Vedfelt 1999).

The justness of the interpretation can also be confirmed by – as Ole Vedfelt put it – the dreamer's sense of it all falling into place upon hearing the interpretation. The dreamer simply feels that the interpretation is right.

Yet another means of verification happens when the interpretation suggested by the therapist leads to concrete results in the dreamer's life.

2.1.3. Summary and conclusions

Jung created a completely different school of therapy than his teacher, Freud – one that used dreams in a dissimilar way. It was focused on interpretations concerning the future of the dreamer, development of their soul and examination of what the unconscious wanted to communicate to the dreamer in their dream.

The theory developed by Jung is still willingly used by neo-Jungians. The vivid, intuitively described archetype scan be seen not only in dreams, but also in broadly understood behaviour. It is, then, possible to attempt a determination of the dreamer's psychic properties on the basis of the Jungian dream diagnosis.

However, Jungians do not acknowledge academic methods of examining their theories. Also, the theories are constructed in such a way that they escape experimental approaches (Dudek 2007; Hall, Lindzey, Campbell 1998). Therefore, the neo-Jungian approaches to the interpretation of dreams originating from individual psychology have mainly a therapeutic rather than a diagnostic value.

2.2. Individual psychology

Another student who left Freud to develop his own school of therapy was Alfred Adler (Hall, Lindzey, Campbell 1998). He created the concept of individual psychology, which focused on the lifestyle marking a given individual and being their way of escaping from the unavoidable sense of inferiority. In contrast to his mentor – and many of his students – Adler considered consciousness the centre of human personality.

2.2.1. Interpretation of dreams in individual psychology

According to Adler, dreams are the continuation of waking life, reflecting the same unique personality of the individual which leaves its stamp on their daily life. He simultaneously suggested that in their dreams, people try to solve problems they have not managed to solve outside sleep (Doweiko 1982; Lombardi, Elcock 1997; Vedfelt 1999).

According to Adler, dreams also reflect elements of a given person's lifestyle: their private logic and private reason, and support dreamers in their opposing the requirements of life in society (Doweiko 1982; Lombardi, Elcock 1997).

The interpretation of dreams in individual psychology is based on the giving of meaning to symbols present in dreams together with the dreamer (Lombardi, Elcock 1997).

3. Contemporary basis of the dream science

Psychoanalysis originates from the 19th century science, whereas the concepts of therapy and dreams discussed in the second part hereof are directly based on

psychoanalysis. The discoveries I shall discuss in this part lie at the foundation of the contemporary concepts of dreams.

3.1. Chronobiology

It was as early as in 1932 that Eugene Aserinsky and Nathaniel Kleitman discovered that dreams are phenomena that have phases (Borbély 1984; Zimbardo 2001; Zimbardo, Johnson, McCann 2012). The two phases are: REM (*Rapid Eye Movement*) and NREM (*Non Rapid Eye Movement*). During the first, the dreamers' eyes move very rapidly, while their body does not move. The second phase is the relaxation of the body and slow movements of the eyes.

Present-day chronopsychology provides that sleep is a mesogenous rhythm. Endogenous rhythms are related to our biology. They only adjust to the external environment, but are not determined by them. The exogenous rhythms are determined by the external environment, and they are an effect of learning. The sleep/wake rhythm is marked by qualities of both these rhythms (Ciarkowska 2015). On the one hand, it is indispensable for the survival of the human body, and belongs to the biological heritage. In this way, it is an endogenous rhythm. On the other hand, it is largely determined by social life, occupation, and even the volitional change of habits, which brings it closer to exogenous rhythms. It is now believed that the REM stage cycle is more primary.

3.2. Neurology

In 1977, J. Allan Hobson and Robert McCarley described the activation-synthesis hypothesis being a contemporary basis for dream theory. The hypothesis provides that during the REM stage, the provision of external stimuli is limited. However, the brain remains under the influence of the chaotic stimulation originating from the brainstem. As aforementioned, during the REM stage, the body of the sleeping person remains immobile, but the muscles continue to be stimulated by neural connections. The optic nerves are also stimulated. The described neuromuscular activation is connected with memory traces, which fit best to it. In this way, dreams are formed.

3.3. Summary

The latest dream theories are based on the discoveries of modern science. One of the grounds for them is the regularity of sleep determined by the mesogenous sleep-wake rhythm. Another is the neurological foundations indicating that dreams are based on chaotic impulsation from the brainstem that stimulates the brain, muscles, and optic nerves.

Hobson and McCarley's work does not provide any dream interpretation framework, but the researchers do not exclude that other theories may discover the sense of dreams (Hobson, McCarley 1977).

4. Cognitive understanding of dreams

The interpretation of dreams – although associated mainly with psychoanalysis and the psychotherapy school related to it – was also present at the birth of the cognitive therapy (Rosner 2004). Aaron Beck, one of the fathers of the approach, tried to promote this diagnostic technique also on this ground. However, due to the alliances of cognitive therapists with behavioural therapists, who were not supporters of dream interpretation, as well as the arduousness and troublesomeness of the exploration of dreams, he finally discontinued his work in this scope.

Beck believed that dreams are a biopsy of the dreamer's cognitive processes, presenting, in a manner exaggerated in relation to the daily life, various mistakes that are indispensable for the human cognitive system – ones that cognitive and cognitive-behavioural therapy tries to eliminate or reduce (putting it in largely simplified terms) (Padesky, Greenberger 2004).

Contemporarily, the topic of the interpretation of dreams in the cognitive paradigm was explored by Harold Doweiko. Taking Alfred Adler's theory as a basis, Doweiko determined that the individual reason and the private reason described by the creator of individual psychology are nothing else but a "cognitive set" of the dreamers i.e., in simple terms – similarly to Aaron Beck's approach – whatever is responsible for all the cognitive mistakes also when we are awake (Doweiko 1982). After adding the contemporary neurology to the above (cf. 3.2.), Doweiko assumed that the cognitive set is to interpret the chaotic impulses from the brainstem and bodily tensions. This allows to better see in dreams what concrete cognitive mistakes are most suffered by a given person and lie at the base of their problems, and which ones cause mood changes after waking up. Doweiko believes that our moods are determined by our dreams (Doweiko 2004).

In view of the ease of the operationalization of cognitive theories and their strong grounding in scientific concepts on the basis of Doweiko and Beck's reflections, I carried out a study focusing on the identification of dreamers' beliefs. Its results suggest that the procedure can be effective (cf. Dąbrowski 2015). The study allows to believe that the cognitive paradigm of the interpretation of dreams offers both benefits that are pragmatic (assistance in psychotherapy), and theoretical (indicators that are easy to operationalize and measure), thus allowing us to come closer to the gist of dreams. The topic calls for further research and, hopefully, this paper will successfully encourage the readers to pursue it.

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Summary

Dream-based Diagnosis of the Psyche

The domains of dreams and imagination are close to one another. This article discusses if it is possible to identify real psychological traits on the basis of dreams.

The following dream theories are discussed: classical psychoanalytical theory, Carl Jung's analytical psychology, Alfred Adler's individual psychology, and the cognitive theories of Aaron Beck and Harold Doweiko. Their presentation is supplemented with neuropsychological and chronobiological approaches.

Keywords

dream, sleep, psychotherapy, psychology