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The Interpretation of Dreams

Sigmund Freud ⓘ

The Interpretation of Dreams (1900)

Wish-Fulfilment

The dream of the burning child at the beginning of this chapter gives us a welcome opportunity of considering the difficulties with which the theory of wish-fulfilment is faced. It will no doubt have surprised all of us to be told that dreams are nothing other than fulfilments of wishes, and not only on account of the contradiction offered by anxiety-dreams. When analysis first revealed to us that a meaning and a psychical value lay concealed behind dreams, we were no doubt quite unprepared to find that that meaning was of such a uniform character. According to Aristotle's accurate but bald definition, a dream is thinking that persists (in so far as we are asleep) in the state of sleep. [Cf. p. 2.] Since, then, our daytime thinking produces psychical acts of such various sorts—judgements, inferences, denials, expectations, intentions, and so on—why should it be obliged during the night to restrict itself to the production of wishes alone? Are there not, on the contrary, numerous dreams which show us psychical acts of other kinds—worries, for instance—transformed into dream-shape? And was not the dream with which we began this chapter (a quite

particularly transparent one) precisely a dream of this sort? When the glare of light fell on the eyes of the sleeping father, he drew the worrying conclusion that a candle had fallen over and might have set the dead body on fire. He turned this conclusion into a dream by clothing it in a sensory situation and in the present tense. What part was played in this by wish-fulfilment? can we fail to see in it the predominating influence of a thought persisting from waking life or stimulated by a new sense-impression? All this is quite true and compels us to enter more closely into the part played by wish-fulfilment in dreams and into the importance of waking thoughts which persist into sleep.

We have already been led by wish-fulfilment itself to divide dreams into two groups. We have found some dreams which appeared openly as wish-fulfilments, and others in which the wish-fulfilment was unrecognizable and often disguised by every

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possible means. In the latter we have perceived the dream-censorship at work. We found the undistorted wishful dreams principally in children; though *short*, frankly wishful dreams *seemed* (and I lay emphasis upon this qualification) to occur in adults as well.

We may next ask where the wishes that come true in dreams originate. What contrasting possibilities or what alternatives have we in mind in raising this question? It is the contrast, I think, between the consciously perceived life of daytime and a psychical activity which has remained unconscious and of which we can only become aware at night. I can distinguish three possible origins for such a wish. (1) It may have been aroused during the day and for external reasons may not have been satisfied; in that case an acknowledged wish which has not been dealt with is left over for the night. (2) It may have arisen during the day but been repudiated; in that case what is left over is a wish which has not been dealt with but has been suppressed. (3) It may have no connection with daytime life and be one of those wishes which only emerge from the suppressed part of the mind and become active in us at night. If we turn again to our schematic picture of the psychical apparatus, we shall localize wishes of the first kind in the system *Pcs.*; we shall suppose that wishes of the second kind have been driven out of the system *Pcs.* into the *Ucs.*, where, if at all, they continue to exist; and we shall conclude that wishful impulses of the third kind are altogether incapable of passing beyond the system *Ucs.* The question then

arises whether wishes derived from these different sources are of equal importance for dreams and have equal power to instigate them.

If we cast our minds over the dreams that are at our disposal for answering this question, we shall at once be reminded that we must add a fourth source of dream-wishes, namely the current wishful impulses that arise during the night (e.g. those stimulated by thirst or sexual needs). In the next place, we shall form the opinion that the place of origin of a dream-wish probably has no influence on its capacity for instigating dreams. I may recall the little girl's dream which prolonged a trip on the lake that had been interrupted during the day and the other children's dreams which I have recorded. [See p. 127 ff.] They were explained as being due to unfulfilled, but unsuppressed, wishes from the previous day. Instances of a wish that has been

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suppressed in the daytime finding its way out in a dream are exceedingly numerous. I will add a further very simple example of this class. The dreamer was a lady who was rather fond of making fun of people and one of whose friends, a woman younger than herself, had just become engaged. All day long she had been asked by her acquaintances whether she knew the young man and what she thought of him. She had replied with nothing but praises, with which she had silenced her real judgement; for she would have liked to tell the truth—that he was a '*Dutzendmensch*' [literally a 'dozen man', a very commonplace sort of person—people like him are turned out by the *dozen*]. She dreamt that night that she was asked the same question, and replied with the formula: '*In the case of repeat orders it is sufficient to quote the number.*'; We have learnt, lastly, from numerous analyses that wherever a dream has undergone distortion the wish has arisen from the unconscious and was one which could not be perceived during the day. Thus it seems at a first glance as though all wishes are of equal importance and equal power in dreams.

I cannot offer any proof here that the truth is nevertheless otherwise; but I may say that I am strongly inclined to suppose that dream-wishes are more strictly determined. It is true that children's dreams prove beyond a doubt that a wish that has not been dealt with during the day can act as a dream-instigator. But it must not be forgotten that it is a *child's* wish, a wishful impulse of the strength proper to children. I think it is highly doubtful whether in the case of an adult a wish that has not been fulfilled during the day would be strong enough to produce a dream. It seems to me, on the contrary, that, with the progressive

control exercised upon our instinctual life by our thought-activity, we are more and more inclined to renounce as unprofitable the formation or retention of such intense wishes as children know. It is possible that there are individual differences in this respect, and that some people retain an infantile type of mental process longer than others, just as there are similar differences in regard to the diminution of visual imagery, which is so vivid in early years. But in general, I think, a wish that has been left over unfulfilled from the previous day is insufficient to produce a dream in the case of an adult. I readily admit that a wishful impulse originating in the conscious will *contribute* to the instigation of a dream, but it will probably not

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do more than that. The dream would not materialize if the preconscious wish did not succeed in finding reinforcement from elsewhere.

From the unconscious, in fact. *My supposition is that a conscious wish can only become a dream-instigator if it succeeds in awakening an unconscious wish with the same tenor and in obtaining reinforcement from it.* From indications derived from the psycho-analysis of the neuroses, I consider that these unconscious wishes are always on the alert, ready at any time to find their way to expression when an opportunity arises for allying themselves with an impulse from the conscious and for transferring their own great intensity on to the latter's lesser one.¹ It will then *appear* as though the conscious wish alone had been realized in the dream; only some small peculiarity in the dream's configuration will serve as a finger-post to put us on the track of the powerful ally from the unconscious. These wishes in our unconscious, ever on the alert and, so to say, immortal, remind one of the legendary Titans, weighed down since primaeval ages by the massive bulk of the mountains which were once hurled upon them by the victorious gods and which are still shaken from time to time by the convulsion of their limbs. But these wishes, held under repression, are themselves of infantile origin, as we are taught by psychological research into the neuroses. I would propose, therefore, to set aside the assertion made just now [p. 551], that the place of origin of dream-wishes is a matter of indifference and replace it by another one to the following effect: *a wish which is represented in a dream must be an infantile one.* In the case of adults it originates from the *Ucs.*, in the case of children, where there is as yet no division or censorship between the *Pcs.* and the *Ucs.*, or where that division is only gradually being set up, it is an unfulfilled, unrepressed wish from waking

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¹ *They share this character of indestructibility with all other mental acts which are truly unconscious, i.e. which belong to the system Ucs. only. These are paths which have been laid down once and for all, which never fall into disuse and which, whenever an unconscious excitation re-cathects them, are always ready to conduct the excitatory process to discharge. If I may use a simile, they are only capable of annihilation in the same sense as the ghosts in the underworld of the Odyssey—ghosts which awoke to new life as soon as they tasted blood. Processes which are dependent on the preconscious system are destructible in quite another sense. The psychotherapy of the neuroses is based on this distinction. [See below, p. 577 f.]*

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life. I am aware that this assertion cannot be proved to hold universally; but it can be proved to hold frequently, even in unsuspected cases, and it cannot be *contradicted* as a general proposition.

In my view, therefore, wishful impulses left over from conscious waking life must be relegated to a secondary position in respect to the formation of dreams. I cannot allow that, as contributors to the content of dreams, they play any other part than is played, for instance, by the material of sensations which become currently active during sleep. (See pp. 228-9.) I shall follow the same line of thought in now turning to consider those psychical instigations to dreaming, left over from waking life, which are *other* than wishes. When we decide to go to sleep, we may succeed in temporarily bringing to an end the cathexes of energy attaching to our waking thoughts. Anyone who can do this easily is a good sleeper; the first Napoleon seems to have been a model of this class. But we do not always succeed in doing so, nor do we always succeed completely. Unsolved problems, tormenting worries, overwhelming impressions—all these carry thought-activity over into sleep and sustain mental processes in the system that we have named the preconscious. If we wish to classify the thought-impulses which persist in sleep, we may divide them into the following groups: (1) what has not been carried to a conclusion during the day owing to some chance hindrance; (2) what has not been dealt with owing to the insufficiency of our intellectual power—what is unsolved; (3) what has been rejected and suppressed during the daytime. To these we must add (4) a powerful group consisting of what has been set in action in our *Ucs.* by the activity of the preconscious in the course of the day; and finally (5) the group of daytime impressions which are indifferent and have for that reason not been dealt with.

There is no need to underestimate the importance of the psychical intensities which are introduced into the state of sleep by these residues of daytime life, and particularly of those in the group of unsolved problems. It is certain that these excitations continue to struggle for expression during the night; and we may assume with equal certainty that the state of sleep makes it impossible for the excitatory process to be pursued in the habitual manner in the preconscious and brought to an end

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by becoming conscious. In so far as our thought-processes are able to become conscious in the normal way at night, we are simply not asleep. I am unable to say what modification in the system *Pcs.* is brought about by the state of sleep;¹ but there can be no doubt that the psychological characteristics of sleep are to be looked for essentially in modifications in the cathexis of this particular system—a system that is also in control of access to the power of movement, which is paralysed during sleep. On the other hand, nothing in the psychology of dreams gives me reason to suppose that sleep produces any modifications other than secondary ones in the state of things prevailing in the system *Ucs.* No other course, then, lies open to excitations occurring at night in the *Pcs.* than that followed by wishful excitations arising from the *Ucs.*; the preconscious excitations must find reinforcement from the *Ucs.* and must accompany the unconscious excitations along their circuitous paths. But what is the relation of the preconscious residues of the previous day to *dreams*? There is no doubt that they find their way into dreams in great quantity, and that they make use of the content of dreams in order to penetrate into consciousness even during the night. Indeed they occasionally dominate the content of a dream and force it to carry on the activity of daytime. It is certain, too, that the day's residues may be of any other character just as easily as wishes; but it is highly instructive in this connection, and of positively decisive importance for the theory of wish-fulfilment, to observe the condition to which they must submit in order to be received into a dream.

Let us take one of the dreams I have already recorded—for instance, the one in which my friend Otto appeared with the signs of Graves' disease. (See p. 269 ff.) I had been worried during the previous day by Otto's looks; and, like everything else concerned with him, this worry affected me closely. And it pursued me, as I may assume, into my sleep. I was probably anxious to discover what could be wrong with him. This worry found expression during the night in the dream I

have described, the content of which was in the first place nonsensical and in the second place was in no respect the fulfilment of a

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¹[Footnote added 1919:] *I have tried to penetrate further into an understanding of the state of things prevailing during sleep and of the determining conditions of hallucination in a paper entitled 'A Metapsychological Supplement to the Theory of Dreams' [Freud, 1917d].*

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wish. I then began to investigate the origin of this inappropriate expression of the worry I had felt during the day, and by means of analysis I found a connection through the fact of my having identified my friend with a certain Baron L. and myself with Professor R. There was only one explanation of my having been obliged to choose this particular substitute for my daytime thought. I must have been prepared at all times in my *Ucs.* to identify myself with Professor R., since by means of that identification one of the immortal wishes of childhood—the megalomaniac wish—was fulfilled. Ugly thoughts hostile to my friend, which were certain to be repudiated during the day, had seized the opportunity of slipping through with the wish and getting themselves represented in the dream; but my daytime worry had also found some sort of expression in the content of the dream by means of a substitute. [Cf. p. 267.] The daytime thought, which was not in itself a wish but on the contrary a worry, was obliged to find a connection in some way or other with an infantile wish which was now unconscious and suppressed, and which would enable it—suitably decocted, it is true—to 'originate' in consciousness. The more dominating was the worry, the more far-fetched a link could be established; there was no necessity for there being any connection whatever between the content of the wish and that of the worry, and in fact no such connection existed in our example.

It may perhaps be useful¹ to continue our examination of the same question by considering how a dream behaves when the dream-thoughts present it with material which is the complete reverse of a wish-fulfilment—well-justified worries, painful reflections, distressing realizations. The many possible outcomes can be classed under the two following groups. (A) The dream-work may succeed in replacing all the distressing ideas by contrary ones and in suppressing the unpleasurable affects attaching to them. The result will be a straightforward dream of satisfaction, a palpable 'wish-fulfilment', about which there seems no more to be said. (B) The distressing ideas may make their way,

more or less modified but none the less quite recognizable, into the manifest content of the dream. This is the case which raises doubts as to the validity of the wish theory of dreams and needs further investigation. Dreams of this sort with a distressing

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¹[*This paragraph and the two following ones were added in 1919.*]

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content may either be experienced with indifference, or they may be accompanied by the whole of the distressing affect which their ideational content seems to justify, or they may even lead to the development of anxiety and to awakening.

Analysis is able to demonstrate that these unpleasurable dreams are wish-fulfilments no less than the rest. An unconscious and repressed wish, whose fulfilment the dreamer's ego could not fail to experience as something distressing, has seized the opportunity offered to it by the persisting cathexis of the distressing residues of the previous day; it has lent them its support and by that means rendered them capable of entering a dream. But whereas in Group A the unconscious wish coincided with the conscious one, in Group B the gulf between the unconscious and the conscious (between the repressed and the ego) is revealed and the situation in the fairy tale of the three wishes which were granted by the fairy to the husband and wife is realized. (See below, p. 580 f. *n.*) The satisfaction at the fulfilment of the repressed wish may turn out to be so great that it counterbalances the distressing feelings attaching to the day's residues [cf. p. 470]; in that case the feeling-tone of the dream is indifferent, in spite of its being on the one hand the fulfilment of a wish and on the other the fulfilment of a fear. Or it may happen that the sleeping ego takes a still larger share in the constructing of the dream, that it reacts to the satisfying of the repressed wish with violent indignation and itself puts an end to the dream with an outburst of anxiety. Thus there is no difficulty in seeing that unpleasurable dreams and anxiety-dreams are just as much wish-fulfilments in the sense of our theory as are straightforward dreams of satisfaction.

Unpleasurable dreams may also be 'punishment-dreams'. [See p. 473 ff.] It must be admitted that their recognition means in a certain sense a new addition to the theory of dreams. What is fulfilled in them is equally an unconscious wish, namely a wish that the dreamer may be punished for a repressed and forbidden wishful impulse. To that extent dreams of this kind fall in with the condition that has been laid down here that the motive force for constructing a

dream must be provided by a wish belonging to the unconscious. A closer psychological analysis, however, shows how they differ from other wishful dreams. In the cases forming Group B the dream-constructing

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wish is an unconscious one and belongs to the repressed, while in punishment-dreams, though it is equally an unconscious one, it must be reckoned as belonging not to the repressed but to the 'ego'. Thus punishment-dreams indicate the possibility that the ego may have a greater share than was supposed in the construction of dreams. The mechanism of dream-formation would in general be greatly clarified if instead of the opposition between 'conscious' and 'unconscious' we were to speak of that between the 'ego' and the 'repressed'. This cannot be done, however, without taking account of the processes underlying the psychoneuroses, and for that reason it has not been carried out in the present work. I will only add that punishment-dreams are not in general subject to the condition that the day's residues shall be of a distressing kind. On the contrary, they occur most easily where the opposite is the case—where the day's residues are thoughts of a satisfying nature but the satisfaction which they express is a forbidden one. The only trace of these thoughts that appears in the manifest dream is their diametric opposite, just as in the case of dreams belonging to Group A. The essential characteristic of punishment-dreams would thus be that in their case the dream-constructing wish is not an unconscious wish derived from the repressed (from the system *Ucs.*), but a punitive one reacting against it and belonging to the ego, though at the same time an unconscious (that is to say, preconscious) one.¹

I will report a dream of my own² in order to illustrate what I have just said, and in particular the way in which the dream-work deals with a residue of distressing anticipations from the previous day.

'Indistinct beginning. I said to my wife that I had a piece of news for her, something quite special. She was alarmed and refused to listen. I assured her that on the contrary it was something that she would be very glad to hear, and began to tell her that our son's officer's mess had sent a sum of money (5000 Kronen?) ... something about distinction ... distribution.... Meanwhile I had gone with her into a small

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¹[Footnote added 1930:] This would be the appropriate point for a reference to the 'super-ego', one of the later findings of psycho-analysis. [Cf. p. 476, n. 2.—A class of dreams which are an exception to the 'wish-theory' (those which occur in traumatic neuroses) is discussed in Chapter II of *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920g) and in the last pages of Lecture XXIX in the *New Introductory Lectures* (1933a).]

²[This paragraph and the two following ones were added as a footnote in 1919, and incorporated in the text in 1930.]

room, like a store-room, to look for something. Suddenly I saw my son appear. He was not in uniform but in tight-fitting sports clothes (like a seal?), with a little cap. He climbed up on to a basket that was standing beside a cupboard, as though he wanted to put something on the cupboard. I called out to him: no reply. It seemed to me that his face or forehead was bandaged. He was adjusting something in his mouth, pushing something into it. And his hair was flecked with grey. I thought: "Could he be as exhausted as all that? And has he got false teeth?"; Before I could call out again I woke up, feeling no anxiety but with my heart beating rapidly. My bedside clock showed that it was two thirty.'

Once again it is impossible for me to present a complete analysis. I must restrict myself to bringing out a few salient points. Distressing anticipations from the previous day were what gave rise to the dream: we had once more been without news of our son at the front for over a week. It is easy to see that the content of the dream expressed a conviction that he had been wounded or killed. Energetic efforts were clearly being made at the beginning of the dream to replace the distressing thoughts by their contrary. I had some highly agreeable news to communicate—something about money being sent ... distinction ... distribution. (The sum of money was derived from an agreeable occurrence in my medical practice; it was an attempt at a complete diversion from the topic.) But these efforts failed. My wife suspected something dreadful and refused to listen to me. The disguises were too thin and references to what it was sought to repress pierced through them everywhere. If my son had been killed, his fellow-officers would send back his belongings and I should have to distribute what he left among his brothers and sisters and other people. A 'distinction' is often awarded to an officer who has fallen in battle. Thus the dream set about giving direct expression to what it had first sought to deny, though the inclination towards wish-fulfilment was still shown at work in the distortions. (The change of locality during the dream is no doubt to be understood as what Silberer [1912] has described as 'threshold symbolism'. [Cf. above, p. 504 f.]) We cannot tell, it is true, what it was that provided the dream

with the motive force for thus giving expression to my distressing thoughts. My son did not appear as someone 'falling' but as someone 'climbing'. He had in fact been a keen mountaineer. He was not in uniform but in sports clothes; this

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meant that the place of the accident that I *now* feared had been taken by an *earlier*, sporting one; for he had had a fall during a ski-ing expedition and broken his thigh. The way in which he was dressed, on the other hand, which made him look like a seal, at once recalled someone younger—our funny little grandson; while the grey hair reminded me of the latter's father, our son-in-law, who had been hard hit by the war. What could this mean? ... but I have said enough of it.—The locality in a store-closet and the cupboard from which he wanted to take something ('on which he wanted to put something' in the dream)—these allusions reminded me unmistakably of an accident of my own which I had brought on myself when I was more than two and not yet three years old.¹ I had climbed up on to a stool in the store-closet to get something nice that was lying on a cupboard or table. The stool had tipped over and its corner had struck me behind my lower jaw; I might easily, I reflected, have knocked out all my teeth. The recollection was accompanied by an admonitory thought: 'that serves you right'; and this seemed as though it was a hostile impulse aimed at the gallant soldier. Deeper analysis at last enabled me to discover what the concealed impulse was which might have found satisfaction in the dreaded accident to my son: it was the envy which is felt for the young by those who have grown old, but which they believe they have completely stifled. And there can be no question that it was precisely the *strength* of the painful emotion which would have arisen if such a misfortune had really happened that caused that emotion to seek out a repressed wish-fulfilment of this kind in order to find some consolation.²

I am now in a position to give a precise account of the part played in dreams by the unconscious wish. I am ready to admit that there is a whole class of dreams the *instigation* to which arises principally or even exclusively from the residues of daytime life; and I think that even my wish that I might at long last become a Professor Extraordinarius might have allowed me to sleep through the night in peace if my worry over my friend's health had not still persisted from the previous day [p. 271]. But the worry alone could not have made a dream. The *motive*

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¹[Cf. p. 17, footnote.]

²[This dream is discussed briefly in its possible telepathic aspect at the beginning of Freud's paper on 'Dreams and Telepathy' (1922a).]

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force which the dream required had to be provided by a wish; it was the business of the worry to get hold of a wish to act as the motive force of the dream.

The position may be explained by an analogy. A daytime thought may very well play the part of *entrepreneur* for a dream; but the *entrepreneur*, who, as people say, has the idea and the initiative to carry it out, can do nothing without capital; he needs a *capitalist* who can afford the outlay, and the capitalist who provides the psychical outlay for the dream is invariably and indisputably, whatever may be the thoughts of the previous day, *a wish from the unconscious*.

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Sometimes the capitalist is himself the *entrepreneur*, and indeed in the case of dreams this is the commoner event: an unconscious wish is stirred up by daytime activity and proceeds to construct a dream. So, too, the other possible variations in the economic situation that I have taken as an analogy have their parallel in dream-processes. The *entrepreneur* may himself make a small contribution to the capital; several *entrepreneurs* may apply to the same capitalist; several capitalists may combine to put up what is necessary for the *entrepreneur*. In the same way, we come across dreams that are supported by more than one dream-wish; and so too with other similar variations, which could easily be run through, but which would be of no further interest to us. We must reserve until later what remains to be said of the dream-wish.

The *tertium comparationis* [third element of comparison] in the analogy that I have just used—the quantity² put at the disposal of the *entrepreneur* in an appropriate amount—is capable of being applied in still greater detail to the purpose of elucidating the structure of dreams. In most dreams it is possible to detect a central point which is marked by peculiar sensory intensity, as I have shown on pp. 305 [and 329 f.]. This central point is as a rule the direct representation of the wish-fulfilment, for, if we undo the displacements brought about by the dream-work, we find that the *psychical* intensity of the elements in the dream-thoughts has been replaced by the *sensory* intensity of the

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¹ *[These last two paragraphs are quoted in full by Freud at the end of his analysis of Dora's first dream (1905e, Part II), which, he comments, is a complete confirmation of their correctness.]*

² *[Of capital in the case of the analogy, and of psychological energy in the case of a dream.]*

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elements in the content of the actual dream. The elements in the *neighbourhood* of the wish-fulfilment often have nothing to do with its meaning, but turn out to be derivatives of distressing thoughts that run contrary to the wish. But owing to their being in what is often an artificially established connection with the central element, they have acquired enough intensity to become capable of being represented in the dream. Thus the wish-fulfilment's power of bringing about representation is diffused over a certain sphere surrounding it, within which all the elements—including even those possessing no means of their own—become empowered to obtain representation. In the case of dreams that are actuated by *several* wishes, it is easy to delimit the spheres of the different wish-fulfilments, and gaps in the dream may often be understood as frontier zones between those spheres.¹

Though the preceding considerations have reduced the importance of the part played by the day's residues in dreams, it is worth while devoting a little more attention to them. It must be that they are essential ingredients in the formation of dreams, since experience has revealed the surprising fact that in the content of every dream some link with a recent daytime impression—often of the most insignificant sort—is to be detected. We have not hitherto been able to explain the necessity for this addition to the mixture that constitutes a dream (see p. 181). And it is only possible to do so if we bear firmly in mind the part played by the unconscious wish and then seek for information from the psychology of the neuroses. We learn from the latter that an unconscious idea is as such quite incapable of entering the preconscious and that it can only exercise any effect there by establishing a connection with an idea which already belongs to the preconscious, by transferring its intensity on to it and by getting itself 'covered' by it. Here we have the fact of 'transference',² which provides an explanation of so many striking

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¹ *[A particularly clear summary of the part played by the 'day's residues' in the construction of dreams will be found in the course of Freud's short paper, 1913a.]*

²[In his later writings Freud regularly used this same word 'transference' ('Übertragung') to describe a somewhat different, though not unrelated, psychological process, first discovered by him as occurring in the course of psycho-analytic treatment—namely, the process of 'transferring' on to a contemporary object feelings which originally applied, and still unconsciously apply, to an infantile object. (See, e.g., Freud, 1905e, Section IV, and Freud, 1915a.) The word occurs also in this other sense in the present volume—e.g. on pp. 184 and 200—and had already been so used by Freud in the last pages of Chapter IV of *Studies on Hysteria* (Breuer and Freud, 1895).]

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phenomena in the mental life of neurotics. The preconscious idea, which thus acquires an undeserved degree of intensity, may either be left unaltered by the transference, or it may have a modification forced upon it, derived from the content of the idea which effects the transference. I hope I may be forgiven for drawing analogies from everyday life, but I am tempted to say that the position of a repressed idea resembles that of an American dentist in this country: he is not allowed to set up in practice unless he can make use of a legally qualified medical practitioner to serve as a stalking-horse and to act as a 'cover' in the eyes of the law. And just as it is not exactly the physicians with the largest practices who form alliances of this kind with dentists, so in the same way preconscious or conscious ideas which have already attracted a sufficient amount of the attention that is operating in the preconscious will not be the ones to be chosen to act as covers for a repressed idea. The unconscious prefers to weave its connections round preconscious impressions and ideas which are either indifferent and have thus had no attention paid to them, or have been rejected and have thus had attention promptly withdrawn from them. It is a familiar article in the doctrine of association, and one that is entirely confirmed by experience, that an idea which is bound by a very intimate tie in one direction, tends, as it were, to repel whole groups of new ties. I once attempted to base a theory of hysterical paralyses on this proposition.¹

If we assume that the same need for transference on the part of repressed ideas which we have discovered in analysing the neuroses is also at work in dreams, two of the riddles of the dream are solved at a blow: the fact, namely, that every analysis of a dream shows some recent impression woven into its texture and that this recent element is often of the most trivial kind [p. 180]. I may add that (as we have already found elsewhere [p. 177]) the reason why these recent and indifferent elements so frequently find their way into dreams

as substitutes for the most ancient of all the dream-thoughts is that they have least to fear from the censorship imposed by resistance. But while the

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¹[See Section IV of Freud 1893c]

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fact that *trivial* elements are preferred is explained by their freedom from censorship, the fact that *recent* elements occur with such regularity points to the existence of a need for transference. Both groups of impressions satisfy the demand of the repressed for material that is still clear of associations—the indifferent ones because they have given no occasion for the formation of many ties, and the recent ones because they have not yet had time to form them.

It will be seen, then, that the day's residues, among which we may now class the indifferent impressions, not only *borrow* something from the *Ucs.* when they succeed in taking a share in the formation of a dream—namely the instinctual force which is at the disposal of the repressed wish—but that they also *offer* the unconscious something indispensable—namely the necessary point of attachment for a transference. If we wished to penetrate more deeply at this point into the processes of the mind, we should have to throw more light upon the interplay of excitations between the preconscious and the unconscious—a subject towards which the study of the psychoneuroses draws us, but upon which, as it happens, dreams have no help to offer.

I have only one thing more to add about the day's residues. There can be no doubt that it is they that are the true disturbers of sleep and not dreams, which, on the contrary are concerned to guard it. I shall return to this point later. [See p. 577 ff.]

We have so far been studying dream-wishes: we have traced them from their origin in the region of the *Ucs.* and have analysed their relations to the day's residues, which in their turn may either be wishes or psychical impulses of some other kind or simply recent impressions. In this way we have allowed room for every claim that may be raised by any of the multifarious waking thought-activities on behalf of the importance of the part played by them in the process of constructing dreams. It is not impossible, even, that our account may have provided an explanation of the extreme cases in which a dream, pursuing the activities of daytime, arrives at a happy solution of some unsolved problem of waking life.¹ All we need is an example of this kind, so that we

might analyse it and trace the source of the infantile or repressed wishes whose help has been enlisted and

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¹[See above, p. 64 f. An instance of this is mentioned in a footnote at the end of Section II of *The Ego and the Id* (Freud, 1923b).]

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has reinforced the efforts of preconscious activity with such success. But all this has not brought us a step nearer to solving the riddle of why it is that the unconscious has nothing else to offer during sleep but the motive force for the fulfilment of a *wish*. The answer to this question must throw light upon the psychical nature of wishes, and I propose to give the answer by reference to our schematic picture of the psychical apparatus.

There can be no doubt that that apparatus has only reached its present perfection after a long period of development. Let us attempt to carry it back to an earlier stage of its functioning capacity. Hypotheses, whose justification must be looked for in other directions, tell us that at first the apparatus's efforts were directed towards keeping itself so far as possible free from stimuli;¹ consequently its first structure followed the plan of a reflex apparatus, so that any sensory excitation impinging on it could be promptly discharged along a motor path. But the exigencies of life interfere with this simple function, and it is to them, too, that the apparatus owes the impetus to further development. The exigencies of life confront it first in the form of the major somatic needs. The excitations produced by internal needs seek discharge in movement, which may be described as an 'internal change' or an 'expression of emotion'. A hungry baby screams or kicks helplessly. But the situation remains unaltered, for the excitation arising from an internal need is not due to a force producing a *momentary* impact but to one which is in continuous operation. A change can only come about if in some way or other (in the case of the baby, through outside help) an 'experience of satisfaction' can be achieved which puts an end to the internal stimulus. An essential component of this experience of satisfaction is a particular perception (that of nourishment, in our example) the mnemonic image of which remains associated thenceforward with the memory trace of the excitation produced by the need. As a result of the link that has thus been established, next time this need arises a psychical

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¹[This is the so-called 'Principle of Constancy' which is discussed in the opening pages of *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920g). But it was already a fundamental assumption in some of Freud's earliest psychological writings, e.g. in his posthumously published 'Letter to Josef Breuer' of June 29, 1892 (Freud, 1941a). The whole gist of the present paragraph is already stated in Sections 1, 2, 11 and 16 of Part I of his 'Project for a Scientific Psychology' written in the autumn of 1895 (Freud, 1950a). Cf. Editor's Introduction, p. xv ff.]

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impulse will at once emerge which will seek to re-cathect the mnemic image of the perception and to re-evoke the perception itself, that is to say, to re-establish the situation of the original satisfaction. An impulse of this kind is what we call a wish; the reappearance of the perception is the fulfilment of the wish; and the shortest path to the fulfilment of the wish is a path leading direct from the excitation produced by the need to a complete cathexis of the perception. Nothing prevents us from assuming that there was a primitive state of the psychical apparatus in which this path was actually traversed, that is, in which wishing ended in hallucinating. Thus the aim of this first psychical activity was to produce a 'perceptual identity'¹—a repetition of the perception which was linked with the satisfaction of the need.

The bitter experience of life must have changed this primitive thought-activity into a more expedient secondary one. The establishment of a perceptual identity along the short path of regression within the apparatus does not have the same result elsewhere in the mind as does the cathexis of the same perception from without. Satisfaction does not follow; the need persists. An internal cathexis could only have the same value as an external one if it were maintained unceasingly, as in fact occurs in hallucinatory psychoses and hunger phantasies, which exhaust their whole psychical activity in clinging to the object of their wish. In order to arrive at a more efficient expenditure of psychical force, it is necessary to bring the regression to a halt before it becomes complete, so that it does not proceed beyond the mnemic image, and is able to seek out other paths which lead eventually to the desired perceptual identity being established from the direction of the external world.² This inhibition of the regression and the subsequent diversion of the excitation become the business of a second system, which is in control of voluntary movement—which for the first time, that is, makes use of movement for purposes remembered in advance. But all the complicated thought-activity which is spun out from the mnemic image to the moment at which the perceptual identity

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¹[I.e. something perceptually identical with the 'experience of satisfaction'.]

²[Footnote added 1919:] *In other words, it becomes evident that there must be a means of 'reality-testing' [i.e. of testing things to see whether they are real or not].*

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is established by the external world—all this activity of thought merely constitutes a roundabout path to wish-fulfilment which has been made necessary by experience.¹ Thought is after all nothing but a substitute for a hallucinatory wish; and it is self-evident that dreams must be wish-fulfilments, since nothing but a wish can set our mental apparatus at work. Dreams, which fulfil their wishes along the short path of regression, have merely preserved for us in that respect a sample of the psychical apparatus's primary method of working, a method which was abandoned as being inefficient. What once dominated waking life, while the mind was still young and incompetent, seems now to have been banished into the night—just as the primitive weapons, the bows and arrows, that have been abandoned by adult men, turn up once more in the nursery. *Dreaming is a piece of infantile mental life that has been superseded.* These methods of working on the part of the psychical apparatus, which are normally suppressed in waking hours, become current once more in psychosis and then reveal their incapacity for satisfying our needs in relation to the external world.²

The unconscious wishful impulses clearly try to make themselves effective in daytime as well, and the fact of transference, as well as the psychoses, show us that they endeavour to force their way by way of the preconscious system into consciousness and to obtain control of the power of movement. Thus the censorship between the *Ucs.* and the *Pcs.*, the assumption of whose existence is positively forced upon us by dreams, deserves to be recognized and respected as the watchman of our mental health. Must we not regard it, however, as an act of carelessness on the part of that watchman that it relaxes its activities during the night, allows the suppressed impulses in the *Ucs.* to find expression, and makes it possible for hallucinatory regression to

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¹*The wish-fulfilling activity of dreams is justly extolled by Le Lorrain, who speaks of it as 'sans fatigue sérieuse, sans être obligé de recourir à cette lutte opiniâtre et longue qui use et corrode les jouissances poursuivies [incurring no serious*

fatigue and not being obliged to embark upon the long and obstinate struggle that wears away and spoils enjoyments that have to be pursued']. [Le Lorrain, 1895]

²[Footnote added 1914:] I have elsewhere carried this train of thought further in a paper on the two principles of mental functioning (Freud, 1911b)—the pleasure principle and the reality principle, as I have proposed calling them. [The argument is in fact developed further below, on p. 598 ff.]

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occur once more? I think not. For even though this critical watchman goes to rest—and we have proof that its slumbers are not deep—it also shuts the door upon the power of movement. No matter what impulses from the normally inhibited *Ucs.* may prance upon the stage, we need feel no concern; they remain harmless, since they are unable to set in motion the motor apparatus by which alone they might modify the external world. The state of sleep guarantees the security of the citadel that must be guarded. The position is less harmless when what brings about the displacement of forces is not the nightly relaxation in the critical censorship's output of force, but a pathological reduction in that force or a pathological intensification of the unconscious excitations while the preconscious is still cathected and the gateway to the power of movement stands open. When this is so, the watchman is overpowered, the unconscious excitations overwhelm the *Pcs.*, and thence obtain control over our speech and actions; or they forcibly bring about hallucinatory regression and direct the course of the apparatus (which was not designed for their use) by virtue of the attraction exercised by perceptions on the distribution of our psychical energy. To this state of things we give the name of psychosis.

We are now well on the way to proceeding further with the erection of the psychological scaffolding, which we stopped at the point at which we introduced the two systems *Ucs.* and *Pcs.* But there are reasons for continuing a little with our consideration of wishes as the sole psychical motive force for the construction of dreams. We have accepted the idea that the reason why dreams are invariably wish-fulfilments is that they are products of the system *Ucs.*, whose activity knows no other aim than the fulfilment of wishes and which has at its command no other forces than wishful impulses. If we insist, for even a moment longer, upon our right to base such far-reaching psychological speculations upon the interpretation of dreams, we are in duty bound to prove that those speculations have enabled us to insert dreams into a nexus which can include other psychical structures as well. If such a thing as a system *Ucs.* exists (or something analogous to it for the purposes of our discussion),

dreams cannot be its only manifestation; every dream may be a wish-fulfilment, but apart from dreams there must be other forms of

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abnormal wish-fulfilments. And it is a fact that the theory governing all psychoneurotic symptoms culminates in a single proposition, which asserts that *they too are to be regarded as fulfilments of unconscious wishes*.¹ Our explanation makes the dream only the first member of a class which is of the greatest significance to psychiatrists and an understanding of which implies the solution of the purely psychological side of the problem of psychiatry.²

The other members of this class of wish-fulfilments—hysterical symptoms, for instance—possess one essential characteristic, however, which I cannot discover in dreams. I have learnt from the researches which I have mentioned so often in the course of this work that in order to bring about the formation of a hysterical symptom *both* currents of our mind must converge. A symptom is not merely the expression of a realized unconscious wish; a wish from the preconscious which is fulfilled by the same symptom must also be present. So that the symptom will have *at least* two determinants, one arising from each of the systems involved in the conflict. As in the case of dreams, there are no limits to the further determinants that may be present—to the ‘overdetermination’ of the symptoms.³ The determinant which does not arise from the *Ucs.* is invariably, so far as I know, a train of thought reacting against the unconscious wish—a self-punishment, for instance. I can therefore make the quite general assertion that *a hysterical symptom develops only where the fulfilments of two opposing wishes, arising each from a different psychical system, are able to converge in a single expression*. (Compare in this connection my most recent formulations on the origin of hysterical symptoms in my paper on hysterical phantasies and their relation to bisexuality. [Freud, 1908a.]⁴) Examples would serve very little purpose here, since nothing but an exhaustive elucidation of the complications involved

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¹[Footnote added 1914:] *Or more correctly, one portion of the symptom corresponds to the unconscious wish-fulfilment and another portion to the mental structure reacting against the wish.*

²[Footnote added 1914:] As Hughlings Jackson said: 'Find out all about dreams and you will have found out all about insanity.' [Quoted by Ernest Jones (1911), who had heard it at first hand from Hughlings Jackson.]

³[Cf. Freud in Breuer and Freud, 1895, Chapter IV, Section 1, Observation 3.]

⁴[This sentence was added in 1909.]

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could carry conviction. I will therefore leave my assertion to stand for itself and only quote an example in order to make the point clear, and not to carry conviction. In one of my women patients, then, hysterical vomiting turned out to be on the one hand the fulfilment of an unconscious phantasy dating from her puberty—of a wish, that is, that she might be continuously pregnant and have innumerable children, with a further wish, added later, that she might have them by as many men as possible. A powerful defensive impulse had sprung up against this unbridled wish. And, since the patient might lose her figure and her good looks as a result of her vomiting, and so might cease to be attractive to anyone, the symptom was acceptable to the punitive train of thought as well; and since it was permitted by both sides it could become a reality. This was the same method of treating a wish-fulfilment as was adopted by the Parthian queen towards the Roman triumvir Crassus. Believing that he had embarked on his expedition out of love of gold, she ordered molten gold to be poured down his throat when he was dead: 'Now', she said, 'you have what you wanted.' But all that we so far know about dreams is that they express the fulfilment of a wish from the unconscious; it seems as though the dominant, preconscious system acquiesces in this after insisting upon a certain number of distortions. Nor is it possible as a general rule to find a train of thought opposed to the dream-wish and, like its counterpart, realized in the dream. Only here and there in dream analyses do we come upon signs of reactive creations, like, for instance, my affectionate feelings for my friend R. in the dream of my uncle [with the yellow beard] (cf. p. 140 ff.). But we can find the missing ingredient from the preconscious elsewhere. Whereas the wish from the *Ucs.* is able to find expression in the dream after undergoing distortions of every kind, the dominant system withdraws into a *wish to sleep*, realizes that wish by bringing about the modifications which it is able to produce in the cathexes within the psychical apparatus, and persists in that wish throughout the whole duration of sleep.¹

This determined wish on the part of the preconscious to sleep exercises a generally facilitating effect on the formation of dreams. Let me recall the dream dreamt by the man who was

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¹ I have borrowed this idea from the theory of sleep put forward by Liébeault (1889), to whom is due the revival in modern times of research into hypnotism.

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led to infer from the glare of light coming out of the next room that his child's body might be on fire [p. 509 ff.]. The father drew this inference in a dream instead of allowing himself to be woken up by the glare; and we have suggested that one of the psychical forces responsible for this result was a wish which prolonged by that one moment the life of the child whom he pictured in the dream. Other wishes, originating from the repressed, probably escape us, since we are unable to analyse the dream. But we may assume that a further motive force in the production of the dream was the father's need to sleep; his sleep, like the child's life, was prolonged by one moment by the dream. 'Let the dream go on'—such was his motive—'or I shall have to wake up.' In every other dream, just as in this one, the wish to sleep lends its support to the unconscious wish. On p. 123 ff. I described some dreams which appeared openly as dreams of convenience. But in fact all dreams can claim a right to the same description. The operation of the wish to continue sleeping is most easily to be seen in arousal dreams, which modify external sensory stimuli in such a way as to make them compatible with a continuance of sleep; they weave them into a dream in order to deprive them of any possibility of acting as reminders of the external world. That same wish must, however, play an equal part in allowing the occurrence of all other dreams, though it may only be from *within* that they threaten to shake the subject out of his sleep. In some cases, when a dream carries things too far, the *Pcs.* says to consciousness: 'Never mind! go on sleeping! after all it's only a dream!' [See p. 488 f.] But this describes in general the attitude of our dominant mental activity towards dreams, though it may not be openly expressed. I am driven to conclude that *throughout our whole sleeping state we know just as certainly that we are dreaming as we know that we are sleeping*. We must not pay too much attention to the counterargument that our consciousness is never brought to bear on the latter piece of knowledge and that it is only brought to bear on the former on particular occasions when the censorship feels that it has, as it were, been taken off its guard.

On the other hand,¹ there are some people who are quite clearly aware during the night that they are asleep and dreaming and who thus seem to possess the faculty of consciously directing their dreams. If, for instance, a dreamer of this kind

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¹ *[This paragraph was added in 1909.]*

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is dissatisfied with the turn taken by a dream, he can break it off without waking up and start it again in another direction—just as a popular dramatist may under pressure give his play a happier ending. Or another time, if his dream has led him into a sexually exciting situation, he can think to himself: 'I won't go on with this dream any further and exhaust myself with an emission; I'll hold it back for a real situation instead.'

The Marquis d'Hervey de Saint-Denys [1867, 268ff.],¹ quoted by Vaschide (1911, 139), claimed to have acquired the power of accelerating the course of his dreams just as he pleased, and of giving them any direction he chose. It seems as though in his case the wish to sleep had given place to another preconscious wish, namely to observe his dreams and enjoy them. Sleep is just as compatible with a wish of this sort as it is with a mental reservation to wake up if some particular condition is fulfilled (e.g. in the case of a nursing mother or wet-nurse) [p. 223 f.]. Moreover, it is a familiar fact that anyone who takes an interest in dreams remembers a considerably greater number of them after waking.

Ferenczi (1911),² in the course of a discussion of some other observations upon the directing of dreams, remarks: 'Dreams work over the thoughts which are occupying the mind at the moment from every angle; they will drop a dream-image if it threatens the success of a wish-fulfilment and will experiment with a fresh solution, till at last they succeed in constructing a wish-fulfilment which satisfies both agencies of the mind as a compromise.'

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¹ *[This paragraph was added in 1914.]*

² *[This paragraph was added as a footnote in 1914 and included in the text in 1930.]*

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Arousal by Dreams—The Function of Dreams—Anxiety-Dreams

Now that we know that all through the night the preconscious is concentrated upon the wish to sleep, we are in a position to carry our understanding of the process of dreaming a stage further. But first let us summarize what we have learnt so far.

The situation is this. Either residues of the previous day have been left over from the activity of waking life and it has not been possible to withdraw the whole cathexis of energy from them; or the activity of waking life during the course of the day has led to the stirring up of an unconscious wish; or these two events have happened to coincide. (We have already discussed the various possibilities in this connection.) The unconscious wish links itself up with the day's residues and effects a transference on to them; this may happen either in the course of the day or not until a state of sleep has been established. A wish now arises which has been transferred on to the recent material; or a recent wish, having been suppressed, gains fresh life by being reinforced from the unconscious. This wish seeks to force its way along the normal path taken by thought-processes, through the *Pcs.* (to which, indeed, it in part belongs) to consciousness. But it comes up against the censorship, which is still functioning and to the influence of which it now submits. At this point it takes on the distortion for which the way has already been paved by the transference of the wish on to the recent material. So far it is on the way to becoming an obsessive idea or a delusion or something of the kind—that is, *a thought* which has been intensified by transference and distorted in its expression by censorship. Its further advance is halted, however, by the sleeping state of the preconscious. (The probability is that that system has protected itself against the invasion by diminishing its own excitations.) The dream-process consequently enters on a regressive path, which lies open to it precisely owing to the peculiar nature of the state of sleep, and it is led along that path by the attraction exercised on it by groups of memories; some of these memories themselves exist only in the form of

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visual cathexes and not as translations into the terminology of the later systems. [Cf. p. 546.] In the course of its regressive path the dream-process acquires the attribute of representability. (I shall deal later with the question of compression [p. 595].) It has now completed the second portion of its zigzag journey. The first portion was a progressive one, leading from the unconscious scenes or phantasies to the preconscious; the second portion led from the frontier of the censorship back again to perceptions. But when the content of the dream-process has become perceptual, by that fact it has, as it were, found a way of evading the obstacle put in its way by the censorship and the state of sleep in the *Pcs.* [Cf. p. 526.] It succeeds in drawing attention to itself and in being noticed by consciousness.

For consciousness, which we look upon in the light of a sense organ for the apprehension of psychical qualities, is capable in waking life of receiving excitations from two directions. In the first place, it can receive excitations from the periphery of the whole apparatus, the perceptual system; and in addition to this, it can receive excitations of pleasure and unpleasure, which prove to be almost the only psychical quality attaching to transpositions of energy in the inside of the apparatus. All other processes in the ψ -systems, including the *Pcs.*, are lacking in any psychical quality and so cannot be objects of consciousness, except in so far as they bring pleasure or unpleasure to perception. We are thus driven to conclude that *these releases of pleasure and unpleasure automatically regulate the course of cathectic processes*. But, in order to make more delicately adjusted performances possible, it later became necessary to make the course of ideas less dependent upon the presence or absence of unpleasure. For this purpose the *Pcs.* system needed to have qualities of its own which could attract consciousness; and it seems highly probable that it obtained them by linking the preconscious processes with the mnemonic system of indications of speech, a system which was not without quality. [See p. 611*n.* and 617.] By means of the qualities of that system, consciousness, which had hitherto been a sense organ for perceptions alone, also became a sense organ for a portion of our thought-processes. Now, therefore, there are, as it were, *two* sensory surfaces, one directed towards perception and the other towards the preconscious thought-processes.

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I must assume that the state of sleep makes the sensory surface of consciousness which is directed towards the *Pcs.* far more insusceptible to excitation than the surface directed towards the *Pcpt.* systems. Moreover, this abandonment of interest in thought-processes during the night has a purpose: thinking is to come to a standstill, for the *Pcs.* requires sleep. Once, however, a dream has become a *perception*, it is in a position to excite consciousness, by means of the qualities it has now acquired. This sensory excitation proceeds to perform what is its essential function: it directs a part of the available cathectic energy in the *Pcs.* into attention to what is causing the excitation. [See p. 593.] It must therefore be admitted that every dream has an *arousing* effect, that it sets a part of the quiescent force of the *Pcs.* in action. The dream is then submitted by this force to the influence which we have described as secondary revision with an eye to consecutiveness and intelligibility. That is to say, the dream is treated by it just like any other perceptual content; it is met by the same anticipatory ideas, in so far as its subject-matter allows [p. 499]. So far as this

third portion of the dream-process has any direction it is once again a progressive one.

To avoid misunderstandings, a word about the chronological relations of these dream-processes will not be out of place. A very attractive conjecture has been put forward by Goblots [1896, 289 f.], suggested, no doubt, by the riddle of Maury's guillotine dream [p. 26 f.]. He seeks to show that a dream occupies no more than the transition period between sleeping and waking. The process of awakening takes a certain amount of time, and during that time the dream occurs. We imagine that the final dream-image was so powerful that it compelled us to wake; whereas in fact it was only so powerful because at that moment we were already on the point of waking. 'Un rêve c'est un réveil qui commence.'¹

It has already been pointed out by Dugas [1897b] that Goblots would have to disregard many facts before he could assert his thesis generally. Dreams occur from which we do not awaken—for instance, some in which we dream that we are dreaming. With our knowledge of the dream-work, we could not possibly agree that it only covers the period of awakening. It seems probable, on the contrary, that the first portion of the dream-work has already begun during the day, under the control of

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¹ *[A dream is an awakening that is beginning.]*

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the preconscious. Its second portion—the modification imposed by the censorship, the attraction exercised by unconscious scenes, and the forcing of its way to perception—no doubt proceeds all through the night; and in this respect we may perhaps always be right when we express a feeling of having been dreaming all night long, though we cannot say what. [See p. 517.]

But it seems to me unnecessary to suppose that dream-processes really maintain, up to the moment of becoming conscious, the chronological order in which I have described them: that the first thing to appear is the transferred dream-wish, that distortion by the censorship follows, then the regressive change in direction, and so on. I have been obliged to adopt this order in my description; but what happens in reality is no doubt a simultaneous exploring of one path and another, a swinging of the excitation now this way and now that, until at last it accumulates in the direction that is most opportune and one particular grouping becomes the permanent one. Certain personal experiences

of my own lead me to suspect that the dream-work often requires more than a day and a night in order to achieve its result; and if this is so, we need no longer feel any amazement at the extraordinary ingenuity shown in the construction of the dream. In my opinion even the demand for the dream to be made intelligible as a perceptual event may be put into effect before the dream attracts consciousness to itself. From then onwards, however, the pace is accelerated, for at that point a dream is treated in the same fashion as anything else that is perceived. It is like a firework, which takes hours to prepare but goes off in a moment.

The dream-process has by now either acquired sufficient intensity through the dream-work to attract consciousness to itself and arouse the preconscious, irrespectively of the time and depth of sleep; or its intensity is insufficient to achieve this and it must remain in a state of readiness until, just before waking, attention becomes more mobile and comes to meet it. The majority of dreams appear to operate with comparatively low psychical intensities, for they mostly wait until the moment of waking. But this also explains the fact that, if we are suddenly woken from deep sleep, we usually perceive something that we have dreamt. In such cases, just as when we wake of our own accord, the first thing we see is the perceptual content that has been constructed by the dream-work and immediately afterwards

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we see the perceptual content that is offered to us from outside ourselves.

Greater theoretical interest, however, attaches to the dreams which have the power to rouse us in the middle of our sleep. Bearing in mind the expediency which is everywhere else the rule, we may ask why a dream, that is, an unconscious wish, is given the power to interfere with sleep, that is, with the fulfilment of the preconscious wish. The explanation no doubt lies in relations of energy of which we have no knowledge. If we possessed such knowledge, we should probably find that allowing the dream to take its course and expending a certain amount of more or less detached attention on it is an economy of energy compared with holding the unconscious as tightly under control at night as in the daytime. [Cf. p. 578.] Experience shows that dreaming is compatible with sleeping, even if it interrupts sleep several times during the night. One wakes up for an instant and then falls asleep again at once. It is like brushing away a fly in one's sleep: a case of *ad hoc* awakening. If one falls asleep again, the interruption has been disposed of. As is shown by such

familiar examples as the sleep of a nursing mother or wet-nurse [p. 223 f.], the fulfilment of the wish to sleep is quite compatible with maintaining a certain expenditure of attention in some particular direction.

At this point an objection arises, which is based on a better knowledge of unconscious processes. I myself have asserted that unconscious wishes are always active. But in spite of this they seem not to be strong enough to make themselves perceptible during the day. If, however, while a state of sleep prevails, an unconscious wish has shown itself strong enough to construct a dream and arouse the preconscious with it, why should this strength fail after the dream has been brought to knowledge? Should not the dream continue to recur perpetually, precisely as the vexatious fly keeps on coming back after it has been driven away? What right have we to assert that dreams get rid of the disturbance of sleep?

It is perfectly true that unconscious wishes always remain active. They represent paths which can always be traversed, whenever a quantity of excitation makes use of them. [Cf. p. 553n.] Indeed it is a prominent feature of unconscious processes that they are indestructible. In the unconscious nothing can be brought to an end, nothing is past or forgotten. This is brought

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most vividly home to one in studying the neuroses, and especially hysteria. The unconscious path of thoughts, which leads to discharge in a hysterical attack, immediately becomes traversable once more, when sufficient excitation has accumulated. A humiliation that was experienced thirty years ago acts exactly like a fresh one throughout the thirty years, as soon as it has obtained access to the unconscious sources of emotion. As soon as the memory of it is touched, it springs into life again and shows itself cathected with excitation which finds a motor discharge in an attack. This is precisely the point at which psychotherapy has to intervene. Its task is to make it possible for the unconscious processes to be dealt with finally and be forgotten. For the fading of memories and the emotional weakness of impressions which are no longer recent, which we are inclined to regard as self-evident and to explain as a primary effect of time upon mental memory-traces, are in reality secondary modifications which are only brought about by laborious work. What performs this work is the preconscious, and *psychotherapy can pursue no other course than to bring the Ucs. under the domination of the Pcs.*¹

Thus there are two possible outcomes for any particular unconscious excitatory process. Either it may be left to itself, in which case it eventually forces its way through at some point and on this single occasion finds discharge for its excitation in movement; or it may come under the influence of the preconscious, and its excitation, instead of being *discharged*, may be *bound* by the preconscious. *This second alternative is the one which occurs in the process of dreaming.* [See p. 601 n.] The cathexis from the *Pcs.* which goes halfway to meet the dream after it has become perceptual, having been directed on to it by the excitation in consciousness, binds the dream's unconscious excitation and makes it powerless to act as a disturbance. If it is true that the dreamer wakes for an instant, yet he really *has* brushed away the fly that was threatening to disturb his sleep. It begins to dawn on us that it actually *is* more expedient and economical to allow the unconscious wish to take its course, to leave the path to regression open to it so that it can construct a dream, and then to bind the dream and dispose of it with a small expenditure of preconscious work—rather than to continue

[PEP] *This page can be read in German in GESAMMELTE WERKE Vol 2, Page 583*

¹*[The last clause of this sentence was printed in spaced type only from 1919 onwards. Cf. p. 553 n.]*

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keeping a tight rein on the unconscious throughout the whole period of sleep. [Cf. p. 577.] It was indeed to be expected that dreaming, even though it may originally have been a process without a useful purpose, would have procured itself some function in the interplay of mental forces. And we can now see what that function is. Dreaming has taken on the task of bringing back under control of the preconscious the excitation in the *Ucs.* which has been left free; in so doing, it discharges the *Ucs.* excitation, serves it as a safety valve and at the same time preserves the sleep of the preconscious in return for a small expenditure of waking activity. Thus, like all the other psychical structures in the series of which it is a member, it constitutes a compromise; it is in the service of both of the two systems, since it fulfils the two wishes in so far as they are compatible with each other. If we turn back to the 'excretion theory' of dreams put forward by Robert [1886], which I explained on p. 78 ff., we shall see at a glance that in its essence we must accept his account of the *function* of dreams, though differing from him in his premises and in his view of the dream-process itself. [See p. 177 f.]¹

The qualification 'in so far as the two wishes are compatible

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¹[Footnote added 1914:] Is this the only function that can be assigned to dreams? I know of no other. It is true that Maeder [1912] has attempted to show that dreams have other, 'secondary', functions. He started out from the correct observation that some dreams contain attempts at solving conflicts, attempts which are later carried out in reality and which thus behave as though they were trial practices for waking actions. He therefore drew a parallel between dreams and the play of animals and children, which may be regarded as practice in the operation of innate instincts and as preparation for serious activity later on, and put forward the hypothesis that dreams have a 'fonction ludique' ['play function'] Shortly before Maeder, Alfred Adler [1911, 215 n.], too, had insisted that dreams possessed a function of 'thinking ahead'. (In an analysis which I published in 1905 ['Fragment of an Analysis of a Case of Hysteria', Part II (1905e)], a dream, which could only be regarded as expressing an intention, was repeated every night until it was carried out. [Cf. above, p. 190.]) A little reflection will convince us, however, that this 'secondary' function of dreams has no claim to be considered as a part of the subject of dream-interpretation. Thinking ahead, forming intentions, framing attempted solutions which may perhaps be realized later in waking life, all these, and many other similar things, are products of the unconscious and preconscious activity of the mind; they may persist in the state of sleep as 'the day's residues' and combine with an unconscious wish (cf. p. 550 ff.) in forming a dream. Thus the dream's function of 'thinking ahead' is rather a function of preconscious waking thought, the products of which may be revealed to us by the analysis of dreams or of other phenomena. It has long been the habit to regard dreams as identical with their manifest content; but we must now beware equally of the mistake of confusing dreams with latent dream-thoughts. [Cf. p. 506 f. n. above and a passage at the end of the discussion of Case I in Freud's paper on 'Dreams and Telepathy' (1922a)]

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with each other' implies a hint at the possible case in which the function of dreaming may come to grief. The dream-process is allowed to begin as a fulfilment of an unconscious wish; but if this attempted wish-fulfilment jars upon the preconscious so violently that it is unable to continue sleeping, then the dream has made a breach in the compromise and has failed to carry out the second half of its task. In that case the dream is immediately broken off and replaced by a state of complete waking. Here again it is not really the fault of the dream if it has now to appear in the role of a *disturber* of sleep instead of in its normal one of a *guardian* of sleep; and this fact need not prejudice us against its having a useful purpose. This is not the only instance in the

organism of a contrivance which is normally useful becoming useless and disturbing as soon as the conditions that give rise to it are somewhat modified; and the disturbance at least serves the new purpose of drawing attention to the modification and of setting the organism's regulative machinery in motion against it. What I have in mind is of course the case of anxiety-dreams, and in order that I may not be thought to be evading this evidence against the theory of wish-fulfilment whenever I come across it, I will at all events give some hints of their explanation.

There is no longer anything contradictory to us in the notion that a psychical process which develops anxiety can nevertheless be the fulfilment of a wish. We know that it can be explained by the fact that the wish belongs to one system, the *Ucs.*, while it has been repudiated and suppressed by the other system, the *Pcs.*¹ Even where psychical health is perfect, the subjugation of

[PEP] *This page can be read in German in GESAMMELTE WERKE Vol 2, Page 586*

¹[Footnote added 1919:] *A second factor, which is much more important and far-reaching, but which is equally overlooked by laymen is the following. No doubt a wish-fulfilment must bring pleasure; but the question then arises "To whom?" To the person who has the wish, of course. But, as we know, a dreamer's relation to his wishes is a quite peculiar one. He repudiates them and censors them—he has no liking for them, in short. So that their fulfilment will give him no pleasure, but just the opposite; and experience shows that this opposite appears in the form of anxiety, a fact which has still to be explained. Thus a dreamer in his relation to his dream-wishes can only be compared to an amalgamation of two separate people who are linked by some important common element. Instead of enlarging on this, I will remind you of a familiar fairy tale [referred to above on p. 557] in which you will find the same situation repeated. A good fairy promised a poor married couple to grant them the fulfilment of their first three wishes. They were delighted, and made up their minds to choose their three wishes carefully. But a smell of sausages being fried in the cottage next door tempted the woman to wish for a couple of them. They were there in a flash; and this was the first wish-fulfilment. But the man was furious, and in his rage wished that the sausages were hanging on his wife's nose. This happened too; and the sausages were not to be dislodged from their new position. This was the second wish-fulfilment; but the wish was the man's, and its fulfilment was most disagreeable for his wife. You know the rest of the story. Since after all they were in fact one—man and wife—the third wish was bound to be that the sausages should come away from the woman's nose. This fairy tale might be used in many other connections; but here it serves only to illustrate the possibility that if two people are not at one with*

each other the fulfilment of a wish of one of them may bring nothing but unpleasure to the other.' (Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis [Freud, 1916-17], Lecture XIV.)

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the *Ucs.* by the *Pcs.* is not complete; the measure of suppression indicates the degree of our psychical normality. Neurotic symptoms show that the two systems are in conflict with each other; they are the products of a compromise which brings the conflict to an end for the time being. On the one hand, they allow the *Ucs.* an outlet for the discharge of its excitation, and provide it with a kind of sally-port, while, on the other hand, they make it possible for the *Pcs.* to control the *Ucs.* to some extent. It is instructive to consider, for instance, the significance of a hysterical phobia or an agoraphobia. Let us suppose that a neurotic patient is unable to cross the street alone—a condition which we rightly regard as a 'symptom'. If we remove this symptom by compelling him to carry out the act of which he believes himself incapable, the consequence will be an attack of anxiety; and indeed the occurrence of an anxiety-attack in the street is often the precipitating cause of the onset of an agoraphobia. We see, therefore, that the symptom has been constructed in order to avoid an outbreak of anxiety; the phobia is erected like a frontier fortification against the anxiety.

Our discussion cannot be carried any further without examining

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the part played by the affects in these processes; but we can only do so imperfectly in the present connection. Let us assume, then, that the suppression of the *Ucs.* is necessary above all because, if the course of ideas in the *Ucs.* were left to itself, it would generate an affect which was originally of a pleasurable nature, but became unpleasurable after the process of 'repression' occurred. The purpose, and the result too, of suppression is to prevent this release of unpleasure. The suppression extends over the ideational content of the *Ucs.*, since the release of unpleasure might start from that content. This presupposes a quite specific assumption as to the nature of the generation of affect.¹ It is viewed as a motor or secretory function, the key to whose innervation lies in the ideas in the *Ucs.* Owing to the domination established by the *Pcs.* these ideas are, as it were, throttled, and inhibited from sending out impulses which would generate affect. If, therefore, the cathexis from the *Pcs.* ceases, the danger is that the unconscious excitations may release affect of a

kind which (as a result of the repression which has already occurred) can only be experienced as unpleasure, as anxiety.

This danger materializes if the dream-process is allowed to take its course. The conditions which determine its realization are that repressions must have occurred and that the suppressed wishful impulses shall be able to grow sufficiently strong. These determinants are thus quite outside the psychological framework of dream-formation. If it were not for the fact that our topic is connected with the subject of the generation of anxiety by the single factor of the liberation of the *Ucs.* during sleep, I should be able to omit any discussion of anxiety-dreams and avoid the necessity for entering in these pages into all the obscurities surrounding them.

The theory of anxiety-dreams, as I have already repeatedly declared, forms part of the psychology of the neuroses.² We have nothing more to do with it when once we have indicated its point of contact with the topic of the dream-process. There is only one thing more that I can do. Since I have asserted that neurotic anxiety arises from sexual sources, I can submit some

[*PEP*] *This page can be read in German in GESAMMELTE WERKE Vol 2, Page 587*

¹[*For this assumption cf. p. 468 and footnote.*]

²[*The following sentence was added at this point in 1911, but omitted again in 1925 and subsequently: 'Anxiety in dreams, I should like to insist, is an anxiety problem and not a dream problem.'*]

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anxiety-dreams to analysis in order to show the sexual material present in their dream-thoughts.¹

I have good reasons for leaving on one side in the present discussion the copious examples afforded by my neurotic patients, and for preferring to quote some anxiety-dreams dreamt by young people.

It is dozens of years since I myself had a true anxiety-dream. But I remember one from my seventh or eighth year, which I submitted to interpretation some thirty years later. It was a very vivid one, and in it I saw *my beloved mother, with a peculiarly peaceful, sleeping expression on her features, being carried into the room by two (or three) people with birds' beaks and laid upon the bed.* I awoke in tears and screaming, and interrupted my parents' sleep. The strangely draped and unnaturally tall figures with birds' beaks were derived from the illustrations to Philippson's Bible.² I fancy they must have been gods with falcons' heads from

an ancient Egyptian funerary relief. Besides this, the analysis brought to mind an ill-mannered boy, a son of a *concierge*, who used to play with us on the grass in front of the house when we were children, and who I am inclined to think was called Philipp. It seems to me that it was from this boy that I first heard the vulgar term for sexual intercourse, instead of which educated people always use a latin word, 'to copulate', and which was clearly enough indicated by the choice of the falcons' heads.³ I must have guessed the sexual significance of the word from the face of my young instructor, who was well acquainted with the facts of life. The expression on my mother's features in the dream was copied from the view I had had of my grandfather a few days before his death as he lay snoring in a coma. The interpretation carried out in the dream by the 'secondary revision' [p. 490] must therefore have been that my mother was dying; the funerary relief fitted in with this. I awoke in anxiety, which did not cease till I had woken my

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¹ *[Some of the comments in what follows would require revision in the light of Freud's later views on anxiety. See also pp. 160 ff., 236 and 337.]*

² *[Die israelitische Bibel, an edition of the Old Testament in Hebrew and German, Leipzig, 1839-54 (Second ed. 1858). A footnote to the fourth chapter of Deuteronomy shows a number of woodcuts of Egyptian gods, several with birds' heads.]*

³ *[The German slang term referred to is 'vögeln' from 'Vogel' the ordinary word for 'bird'.]*

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parents up. I remember that I suddenly grew calm when I saw my mother's face, as though I had needed to be reassured that she was not dead. But this 'secondary' interpretation of the dream had already been made under the influence of the anxiety which had developed. I was not anxious because I had dreamt that my mother was dying; but I interpreted the dream in that sense in my preconscious revision of it because I was already under the influence of the anxiety. The anxiety can be traced back, when repression is taken into account, to an obscure and evidently sexual craving that had found appropriate expression in the visual content of the dream.

A twenty-seven-year-old man, who had been seriously ill for a year, reported that when he was between eleven and thirteen he had repeatedly dreamt (to the accompaniment of severe anxiety) that *a man with a hatchet was pursuing him; he tried to run away, but seemed to be paralysed and could not move from the*

spot. This is a good example of a very common sort of anxiety-dream, which would never be suspected of being sexual. In analysis, the dreamer first came upon a story (dating from a time later than the dream) told him by his uncle, of how he had been attacked in the street one night by a suspicious-looking individual; the dreamer himself concluded from this association that he may have heard of some similar episode at the time of the dream. In connection with the hatchet, he remembered that at about that time he had once injured his hand with a hatchet while he was chopping up wood. He then passed immediately to his relations with his younger brother. He used to ill-treat this brother and knock him down; and he particularly remembered an occasion when he had kicked him on the head with his boot and had drawn blood, and how his mother had said: 'I'm afraid he'll be the death of him one day.' While he still seemed to be occupied with the subject of violence, a recollection from his ninth year suddenly occurred to him. His parents had come home late and had gone to bed while he pretended to be asleep; soon he had heard sounds of panting and other noises which had seemed to him uncanny, and he had also been able to make out their position in the bed. Further thoughts showed that he had drawn an analogy between this relation between his parents and his own relation to his younger brother. He had subsumed what happened between his parents under the concept of violence and struggling; and he had found

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evidence in favour of this view in the fact that he had often noticed blood in his mother's bed.

It is, I may say, a matter of daily experience that sexual intercourse between adults strikes any children who may observe it as something uncanny and that it arouses anxiety in them. I have explained this anxiety by arguing that what we are dealing with is a sexual excitation with which their understanding is unable to cope and which they also, no doubt, repudiate because their parents are involved in it, and which is therefore transformed into anxiety. At a still earlier period of life sexual excitations directed towards a parent of the opposite sex have not yet met with repression and, as we have seen, are freely expressed. (See p. 256 ff.)

I should have no hesitation in giving the same explanation of the attacks of night terrors accompanied by hallucinations (*pavor nocturnus*) which are so frequent in children. In this case too it can only be a question of sexual

impulses which have not been understood and which have been repudiated. Investigation would probably show a periodicity in the occurrence of the attacks, since an increase in sexual libido can be brought about not only by accidental exciting impressions but also by successive waves of spontaneous developmental processes.

I lack a sufficiency of material based upon observation to enable me to confirm this explanation.¹

Paediatricians, on the other hand, seem to lack the only line of approach which can make this whole class of phenomena intelligible, whether from the somatic or from the psychical aspect. I cannot resist quoting an amusing instance of the way in which the blinkers of medical mythology can cause an observer to miss an understanding of such cases by a narrow margin. My instance is taken from a thesis on *pavor nocturnus* by Debacker (1881, 66):

A thirteen-year-old boy in delicate health began to be apprehensive and dreamy. His sleep became disturbed and was interrupted almost once a week by severe attacks of anxiety accompanied by hallucinations. He always retained a very clear recollection of these dreams. He said that the Devil had shouted at him: 'Now we've got you, now we've got you!' There was then a smell of pitch and brimstone and his skin was burnt by

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¹[Footnote added 1919:] *Since I wrote this a great quantity of such material has been brought forward in psycho-analytic literature.*

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flames. He woke up from the dream in terror, and at first could not cry out. When he had found his voice he was clearly heard to say: 'No, no, not me; I've not done anything!' or 'Please not! I won't do it again!' or sometimes: 'Albert never did that!' Later, he refused to undress 'because the flames only caught him when he was undressed'. While he was still having these devil-dreams, which were a threat to his health, he was sent into the country. There he recovered in the course of eighteen months, and once, when he was fifteen, he confessed: 'Je n'osais pas l'avouer, mais j'éprouvais continuellement des picotements et des surexcitations aux *parties*¹; à la fin, cela m'énervait tant que plusieurs fois j'ai pensé me jeter par la fenêtre du dortoir.'²

There is really very little difficulty in inferring: (1) that the boy had masturbated when he was younger, that he had probably denied it, and that he had been

threatened with severe punishment for his bad habit (cf. his admission: 'Je ne le ferais plus', and his denial: 'Albert n'a jamais fait ça'); (2) that with the onset of puberty the temptation to masturbate had revived with the tickling in his genitals; but (3) that a struggle for repression had broken out in him, which had suppressed his libido and transformed it into anxiety, and that the anxiety had taken over the punishments with which he had been threatened earlier.

And now let us see the inferences drawn by our author (*Standard Ed.*, 69): 'The following conclusions can be drawn from this observation:

'The influence of puberty upon a boy in delicate health can lead to a condition of great weakness and can result in a considerable degree of *cerebral anaemia*.³

'This cerebral anaemia produces character changes, demonomaniac hallucinations and very violent nocturnal (and perhaps also diurnal) anxiety-states.

'The boy's demonomania and self-reproaches go back to the influences of his religious education, which affected him as a child.

'All the symptoms disappeared in the course of a somewhat

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¹*I have italicized this word, but it is impossible to misunderstand it.*

²*[I didn't dare admit it; but I was continually having prickly feelings and overexcitement in my parts; in the end it got on my nerves so much that I often thought of jumping out of the dormitory window.]*

³*The italics are mine.*

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protracted visit to the country, as the result of physical exercise and the regaining of strength with the passage of puberty.

'A predisposing influence upon the origin of the child's brain condition may perhaps be attributed to heredity and to a past syphilitic infection in his father.'

And here is the final conclusion: 'Nous avons fait entrer cette observation dans le cadre des délires apyrétiques d'inanition, car c'est à l'ischémie cérébrale que nous rattachons cet état particulier.'¹

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¹*[We have classified this case among the apyretic deliria of inanition, for we attribute this particular state to cerebral ischaemia.]*

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