

# Dreams, a User's Guide



*Dreams are the royal road to the unconscious - Sigmund Freud*

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*He who looks outside dreams, he who looks inside awakes - C. G. Jung*

# Understanding your dreams

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<i>Introduction to dream interpretation</i>	<b>2</b>
<i>Illumination (the first step)</i>	<b>7</b>
<i>How to capture a dream</i>	<b>7</b>
<i>Amplification (associations)</i>	<b>8</b>
<i>Amplifying the dream</i>	<b>9</b>
<i>Education (understanding the dream message)</i>	<b>10</b>
<i>Understanding the dream</i>	<b>11</b>
<i>Some sample dreams</i>	<b>12</b>
<i>Transformation</i>	<b>14</b>
<i>The real work</i>	<b>14</b>
<i>An example of dream interpretation from Sigmund Freud</i>	<b>15</b>





# Introduction



Throughout history and across cultures one point has always been agreed on by all mystical schools, all the legendary metaphysicians and by all religions that sought to bring the neophyte closer to his or her God, that is simply: **the way to truth lies inside and it is this journey that needs to be undertaken if you want to know your truth.**

Trust me when I tell you that no one else other than you posses the truth. For I speak with the authority of a thousand wise men who have delivered this central message.

The best expression of this comes from Jesus Christ

*Find the kingdom of heaven within you and all else will be added unto you.*

This is the great secret that those who know, know, nothing else. **You are the truth and the way;** find this truth and the kingdom of heaven is yours. The journey to this inner light takes different forms in the different traditions, meditation (Eastern tradition) and prayer (Western tradition) being amongst the most common, but by no means exclusively, the ways are as varied as the schools who teach them.

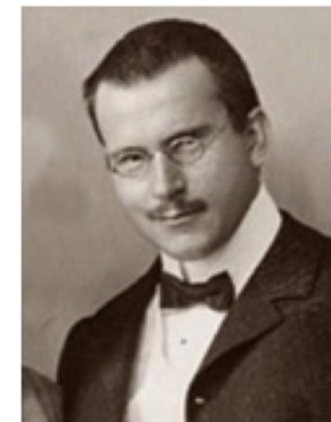
The greatest contemporary exponent of the inner journey to wholeness is the founder of analytical psychology Carl Gustav Jung. Jung taught different ways of undertaking the journey including play, active imagination, enacted imagination, dance, art and the analytical relationship between analyst and analysand. **Central to these and perhaps the crown jewel is dream work.**

## *A Very Brief History*

The father of modern depth psychology and for a time Jung's mentor, Sigmund Freud was the first to identify

dreams as the "royal road to the unconscious." His ground breaking book *The Interpretation of Dreams* being published in 1900, was what first brought him to Jung's attention and led to their collaborative work together.

Ultimately Jung and Freud parted ways in that they chose to interpret the contents of the unconscious differently. The nature of this difference is not something I will enter into here, except to say that it can be understood very simply as a analytic-causal approach designed to identify and resolve unconscious trauma (Freudian) and synthetic-teleological approach designed to understand where the unconscious content is going, what expression it seeks.



Today's analysts whether they be Freudian or Jungian although still expressing a classical bias to the respective founders are more eclectic borrowing from both methods.

My principal method of dream analysis is Jungian which aims at the realisation of meaning rather than pure functional adaptation, although I too borrow heavily, and am influenced, by Freud.

# Dream Work



## Advantages of Dream Work

- They have an objectivity to them which is difficult to find in other contemplative methods. The question that plagues every sincere neophyte on the journey is: *is this real or am I making it up?* Whatever ideas, thoughts, inspirations and visions appear the subject always wonders as to the objectivity or reality of these. This is normal and is only transcended by a very experienced practitioner, a master of the art. Dreams have this quite unique advantage, no one doubts the content of his or her dreams. Whilst there meaning may frequently be hidden, the content itself has a wonderful objectivity. Rarely do people say well I think I dreamt this, I'm not sure..., usually people are quite confident of the content of their dreams.
- Dreams are spontaneous; you don't need to go hunting for them. You sleep every night, and from time

to time during that period of sleep you will dream. The frequency and intensity of the dreams will vary from person to person and are also influenced by the circumstances you find yourself in at any particular time. But almost everyone does dream and as such these dreams are available to us as the voice of the unconscious, the inner friend or God depending on your philosophical orientation.

- They are a direct communication from the unconscious, unmediated by consciousness in their production. Consciousness only comes into the picture when you record and interpret, but the dream itself is a pure product of the unconscious.
- They are honest, sometimes to the point of being cruel, but honest nonetheless.

- They point out what consciousness is unaware of, the conscious blind-spot, so to speak.
- They come when they are needed. Dreams are a form of psychic homeostasis, they regulate the psyche. Dreams are visited upon us for a reason; it is at this time that we need to become aware of something. This could be a variety of different reasons but dreams are always meaningful they serve a purpose, like everything else in your body and in nature, they are functional and intentional. The reasons could vary from pointing out something critical you are missing in a situation you are currently engaged in, a warning or the suggestion of an auspicious outcome, unconscious contents which need to become conscious which are exerting pressure amongst the psyche amongst many other possible reasons.



- It takes time. In a world where time and attention have become our most valuable commodities this can be quite challenging.

- Our attention is usually turned outwards, the world and everything in it is designed to draw us out of ourselves and into extroverted engagement with it. Paying attention to our dreams means diverting a portion of that attention inwards towards our centre, not always an easy thing to do.

- Can be quite a difficult enterprise to undertake on your own, or outside an analytical relationship. A trusted friend or dream partner is invaluable in the process. Dreams point out blind spots, blind spots are so called because naturally they avoid conscious detection by us, however infuriatingly often our friends have got them in full view!

- The biggest challenge of all is the active creation of meaning from the dreams. Understanding, amplifying and coming to terms with the dream material. I am not going to kid you and say that this is easy, it frequently isn't, however it is a task where the reward far exceeds the effort. Still this is a challenge and it requires a few critical components, without which it can rarely be achieved: **desire** (remember all of this is driven by your desire if that is absent then the project is over before it starts), **time**, a degree of patience and discipline and perhaps most significantly **a theory**. Ultimately whatever it is you need to settle on a way of understanding the dreams, **the way** is not as important as **a way**.

Usually the unconscious will work with the medium (i.e. the interpretive medium) you provide. This is a little like the I Ching, the unconscious will use and work intelligently with the medium provided. Naturally some mediums are richer than others and



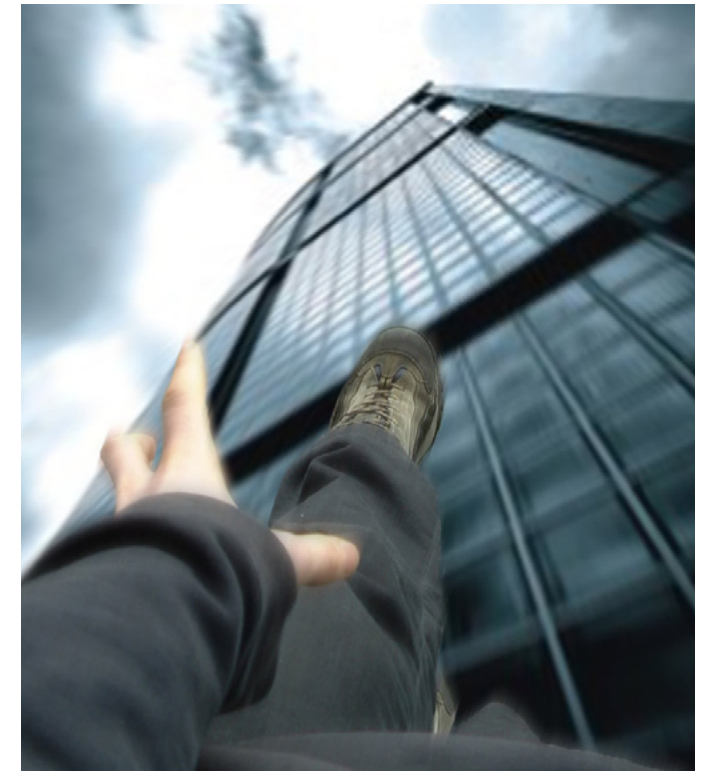
some will suit you better than others. I will provide you with one which I have found to be very effective but it is by no means the only one.

### *The Rewards*

Honestly and without seeking to sensationalise it, the rewards of dream work are immense. They need to be experienced to be truly appreciated, when the truth becomes your truth then something quite magical takes place.

I will list only a few of the rewards that dream work has given me and a few of the people I have worked with, but by no means intend this as a complete description of the benefits.

- Greater self knowledge and self understanding.
- Greater self empathy.
- A connection with an aspect of yourself/God/ the cosmos which is bigger than your ego and this connection is the source of great comfort especially in times of distress.
- Dreams frequently warn against impending events. Dreams coming as they do from the unconscious are not governed and limited by conscious space-time, hence the famously prophetic dreams of the past. Dreams give an insight into a possible future.





- Opportunities, dreams will show you possibilities where previously you saw none.
- Humility, dreams tend to oppose any one sided condition be it personal inflation or a lack of self belief. Once you take them seriously dreams will always show you the opposite of your conscious one sidedness.
- Meaning, for me the most significant benefit, dreams are a route to accessing greater meaning in your life.
- Psychic hygiene, the great lesson from depth psychology is what we don't like about ourselves doesn't disappear into the void, rather it is alive and

well in our unconscious. Being unconscious it exerts an influence, often very negative, in our lives. Dreams allow us to retrieve much of this content, bringing it into consciousness which is the only place it can be transformed.

- This brings me to my last point, **transformation**. Dreams in the final analysis are about transformation. The dream journey is much like the work of the old alchemists it is about finding the ever elusive philosopher's stone, the stone which when found brings untold treasures to its bearer, dreams are a journey to this goal, the goal of self transformation.

### *How to go about the Dream Work*

There has been quite a bit of literature written on dream work which is available for purchase. Although there is a lot of contemporary writing personally I would still read the great masters first. Specifically two books I can recommend are: *The Interpretation of Dreams*, by Sigmund Freud and *Jung on Dreams*, by C. G. Jung. Ideally for a serious study you should read both and then from there one can look at more contemporary writing.

To be clear though please understand these are not books which you are going to read and make sense of in a single sitting, they require some study. Still they are very rich and reading them will put the very little I have said into a much much broader and richer perspective.

However to help you to make a start on this invaluable process without setting such a significant barrier to entry as the study of the original texts I have prepared this very simple, easy to follow Users Guide.

### *Lastly a little about my own Dream Journey*

Like everyone naturally my journey began as a child and I had a number of vivid dreams which I can recall to this day. However three significant events occurred which took me deeper into the dream space.

The first one was meeting my wife and soul mate Anja, who was in the habit of recording her dreams and occasionally she would discuss them with me. This had the effect of raising my awareness of my own dreams and the attention I paid to them. Mythological speaking which is the language of the dream world, Anja was in the role of the *muse or anima*, the spirit woman who visits a man in the mythology to make him aware of





something he previously didn't know, to bring him a message from the other side.

The second event happened in the year 2 000 when I was introduced to Jungian psychology for the first time. This happened through meeting a most remarkable man by the name of Chatillon Coque, a French aristocrat and Jungian scholar whom I spent ten years studying Jung with.

He had over a quarter of a century developed a unique method of dream work which he taught to the "chosen few". Mythological this was the encounter with the wise old man both in terms of Jung himself of course being the legendary sage, but also in my case the encounter with Jung through the mentorship of Chatillon Coque.

The third event was a dream I had on the 9 august 2003. This was what we refer to as a Big Dream, meaning it has elements transcending the purely personal realm. This dream had a very significant impact on my psyche and consequently in my life, and I can chart the next seven years of my life as a journey first mapped out by that dream, including the birth of my two son's a number of years later. In Jungian parlance we would describe this dream as an encounter with the self.

### *Ah to sleep per chance to dream*

With that I leave you my friend's hopeful that this guide will be of some value to you if you are already actively pursuing dream work or if not, that it inspires you to consider this journey. It is one that has proved incredibly rewarding for those who have embarked on it.

*Late at night when you sit sublime atop a forgotten star, spare a thought for a lonely traveler.*

*As you behold the majesty of the cosmos from your lofty seat, think too of the furnace raging deep in the earth.*

*With blessings,  
Stephen.*

## Chapter 1

## ILLUMINATION (the first step)

*The importance of writing down your dreams.*

*Dreams come in many forms, lengths and intensity. To understand them and the meaning they have for you, they need to be recorded. Patterns and repeating images often are a guide to what the psyche deems important issues, and these become clearer when written down in a dedicated book and kept together.*

*When you start paying attention to your dreams, the unconscious starts communication and the frequency of dreams can increase. Sometimes you can have 3 to 6 dreams per night and remember them.*

*The frequency and intensity of your dreams will vary depending on many circumstances, including the amount of unconscious activity at any given time, how much sleep you are getting and other factors. Some people struggle to record complete dreams, and only get fragments at best. Don't let this worry you or stop you, work with these fragments which are usually just as full of meaning as longer dream sequences. The key to the journaling of dreams is to have a dedicated book on hand next to your bed. There is a definite process to dream-work and it starts with the writing down of the dream. Remember that dreams fade during the day, so capture them as soon as possible. The value you will get from doing this far outweighs the effort, however it does require you to be disciplined about recording the dreams.*

***How to capture a dream***

Write the dream down on the **left hand side** of the journal. Write as much detail as possible;

- Write down the dream in sequence of events
- Record colour, sound, smells
- Record orientation of objects scenes you encounter e.g. Where are the objects or people on your left or right, in front or behind, near or far,
- How did you feel
- Did you have any thoughts whilst having the dream
- Write down even a single image if that is all you remember
- Remember you are not trying to make sense of these images yet, don't worry about how bizarre they may appear, don't try and box them into a waking logic, allow the dream logic to speak.
- You can draw images as well from the dream, and frequently this is useful in conveying something inexpressible in words.



## Chapter 2

# Amplification (associations)

*Digging into and amplifying the dream images.*



*Now you have captured your dream, it is important to amplify the images that the dream presents to you. The dream is usually commenting on something that either happened the day before or that was on your mind through an association you encountered that day. So it is important to interpret the dream the same day you record it, directly after you wake up ideally or as soon as possible after that, so that the previous day is still fresh in your mind. If you have recurring dreams, this also applies, since something that happened the previous day, triggered the dream and it will be incredibly useful to you to understand the trigger.*



## Chapter 2

## Amplification (associations)

*Digging into and amplifying the dream images.*



### ***Amplifying the dream***

On the **right hand side** of your journal, opposite to the dream, start recording what the image in the dream brings up for you. Write as much detail as possible;

- Draw as many associations with the dream images as possible. These can be quite varied and are usually only limited by your imagination and the need to think rationally. The example of Freud's dream "Irma's injection" later in the guide an excellent some insight into this process.
- How do you feel in the dream, did something happen the previous day that made you feel the same?
- What did you see? What does it remind you of? What does it make you think of?
- What did you hear?
- What did you smell?
- What did you sense?
- What were you thinking?
- What did you intuit?
- Do you know the people in your dream, or do they remind you of anyone you know? Your relationship with this person is a clue to the dream.

- The environment that the dream is in is also important. Do you know the place or does it remind you of any place that you know?

- Think about your previous day, did anything upset or impress you. Did you have any thoughts about something?

- What is happening in the dream?

**Your dream ego:** you will notice that we ask you to be aware of your inner or subjective state during the dream, this is something which often escapes people and you should be aware of it. This is important and not to be ignored:

What did you experience subjectively whilst the dream was playing itself out? Your dream ego works similarly to your waking ego it s has thoughts; ideas, intuitions etc. and these are significant. However it is a double edged sword, because as in waking life your feeling, thoughts and intuitions differ considerably from what is happening "objectively", and you should make this distinction as well in your dream analysis. In other words you should be cognisant of your subjective state during the dream (thoughts, feeling, and intuitions) but understand that they are not objective dream communications but rather the subjective response of your dream ego to the dream experience.



## Chapter 3

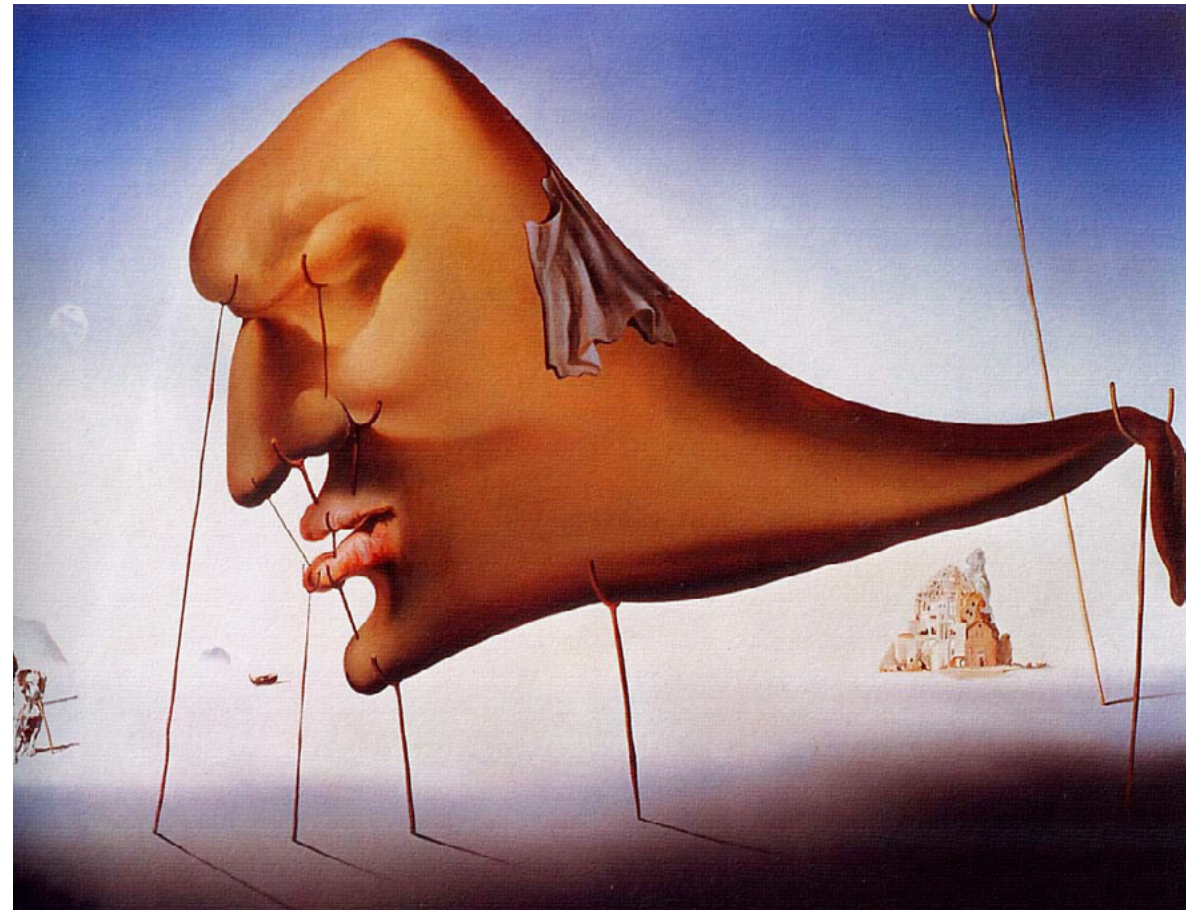
# Education (understanding the dream message)

*Once you have done the amplification, your dream will start revealing itself to you. However, it is important to remember that a dream never has just one interpretation. A dream is like an onion, with many layers. It is also quite possible that the dream is using images that are part of your dream landscape. During the process of illumination, the dream is approached from this angle of whether the images are recurring in your dream world. And to try and understand what these recurring images signify, what is the unconscious communicating?*

*It is important to remember that the dream is usually a criticism of your position or orientation towards a situation. The function of dreams is frequently to provide you with the opposite point of view, in an attempt to balance your conscious one sidedness, a form of psychic homeostasis if you will. Try to see the dream as being the underlying dynamic and the situation that it is commenting on as the expression of that dynamic.*

*Ultimately, the idea is to understand what the dream is implying is really happening. We all project onto situations and relationships; the dream is a key to seeing the “objective” dynamic that is occurring.*

*Turning the spotlight onto the dream.*



## Chapter 3

# Education (understanding the dream message)

### *Understanding the dream*

Now that you have the dream and all the thoughts around it in front of you, try to tie it all together.

- What is the dream commenting on?
- What is it saying about your behaviour/attitude?
- What is it implying about the situation/problem you are experiencing
- How do you feel about it?
- Frequently in this process there is nothing more valuable than a close friend you can discuss the imagery with. Dreams are always attempting to highlight our blind spots. And the nature of blind spots is that we struggle to see them.

A dream-buddy, someone you can share your dreams with and who will help you in building the associations and meaning from the dream, is a huge help in this regard, however be aware that this is a relationship which requires trust, openness and the ability to hear things which may not be to your liking.

More often than not the dream is providing a different perspective than the perspective you hold consciously, as such it can be very irritating, but all the more valuable for being so. A genuine interaction with this process widens the narrow perspective of your conscious self.

*Turning the spotlight onto the dream.*





## Chapter 3

# Education (understanding the dream message)

### *Pot of Green Pasta*

“I am cooking a big pot of green pasta. I have to transfer the pasta to another pot. When I start taking the pasta out, I find my 5 year old son in the pot. His legs stick out of the pot through 2 holes in the side. I take him out carefully so that I don't hurt his legs and put him in the other pot.”

- The dreamer was doing some financial planning the previous day. He was in the middle of changing direction in his professional life. He was feeling anxious about replacing his income with his new professional venture. Transferring the green pasta from one container to another is a symbol of moving the “money” from one career to another. He loves his son dearly and felt that his son symbolised the pressure he was experiencing from the responsibility of caring for his family and making sure that they were financially taken care of.
- His son also represents the future as children do. Cooking is a form of preparation, an alchemical process. So the dreamer is cooking up his future, like the alchemists of old, he is attempting to transmute base metal into gold.
- Green represents money, but it also represents the fruit which is not yet ripe.

• These associations come directly from the dreamer. Using collective symbols is of very limited value without the dreamer's own associations. You need to start with your own associations and then you can consider what these images may represent in the collective consciousness or the collective unconscious to use Jung's terminology.

*Some sample dreams.*



### *Dirty Washing*

“I open my front door and find a washing basket full of dirty washing on the front step”

- This dreamer was going through an emotionally draining divorce, and the dream is expressing his dismay at having his “dirty laundry” displayed to everyone.

## Chapter 3

# Education (understanding the dream message)

### Old Table

“ I find an old table that I can put in my daughters room. It is quite badly dilapidated and needs a lot of TLC.”

- This dreamer was having an argument with relatives. She had realised during the day that she was in the wrong and felt quite bad about the effect the argument had on her relatives. The dream is suggesting that the relationship was in a bad way and needed a lot of TLC. The fact that it was for her daughter's room, supported the idea that reconciling was the right approach, since her daughter had been the one that encouraged reconciliation throughout the disagreement.

### A Message from Dad

The dreamer was in the process of changing professions. He was finding this to be a difficult time in his life and was suffering with some anxiety about this change. “I am on my way to an appointment with a senior manager of a certain organisation, not sure what exactly.

When I call the manager denies that the appointment is at 8.00am, and claims that it is only at 3.30pm. I become quite angry and start arguing with him. He stands his ground however and simply denies the appointment which i know to be the one made. I suspect he is seeking not to meet with me as a way to avoid the issues which need to be dealt with. On my way to his office I meet my father (deceased) who tells me how to handle the confrontation with the manager. He tells me to question his secretary and specifically to ask to see the

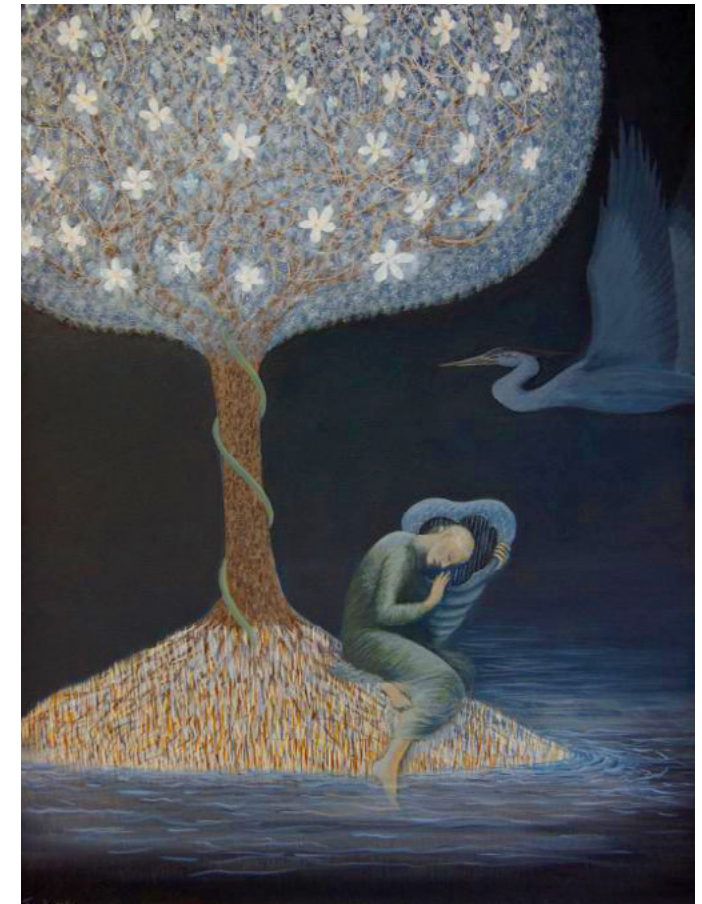


appointment diary. I understand from this I should be less emotional and more strategic in my approach.”

- The dreamer needs to be more strategic and less emotional in his attitude towards the shift in his professional life.
- The manager represents both the new profession personified and also fate itself or God.
- His father is in a sense his actual father (Jung believed when the spirits of deceased relatives visit us in dreams it is effectively the relatives themselves rather than a purely psychic content). In a more psychological sense though we can see his father as his inner guide or the wise old man.

**The above interpretations are obviously just a guide. There is much more to the dream and images like the type of table, what exactly was wrong with it etc are all important parts of the dream to pursue, but for the purposes of an example are too extensive.**

### Some sample dreams.





## Chapter 4

## Transformation

*Taking the next step.**So now what? You understand your dream and what it is saying.**What does that mean for you? The dream is an opportunity to delve into a dynamic which you are living out. Transformation is about looking at patterns in your life and evaluating them. Ultimately you decide whether you need to transform or not.***The real work**

The dream's message is unfolding. Soul searching is the next step.

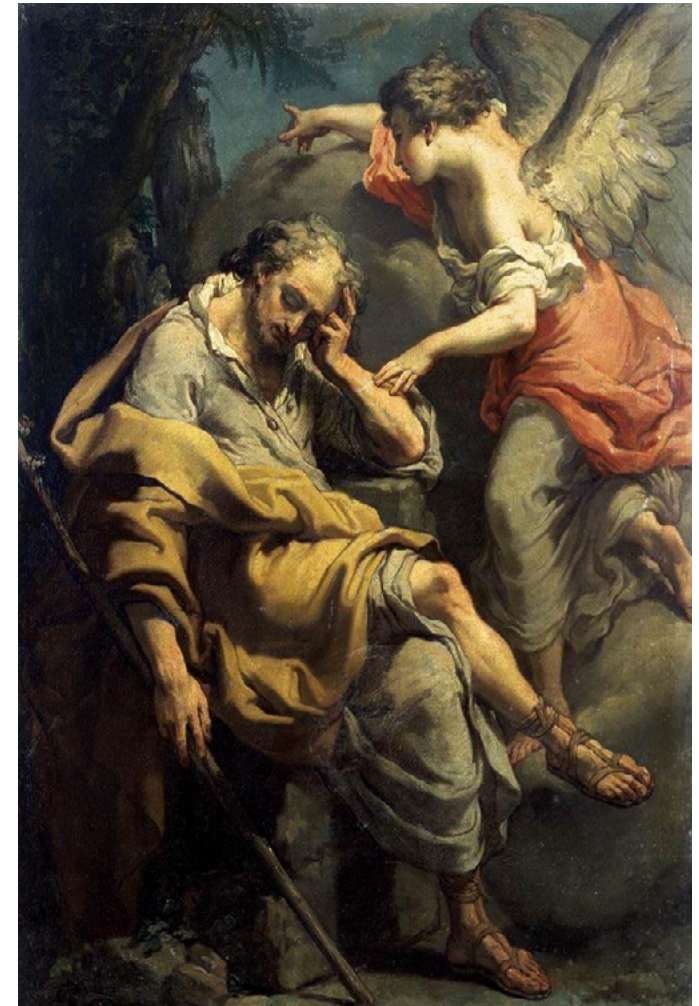
- What is the dynamic or pattern which the dream is commenting on?
- Where do you display this dynamic in your waking life?
- Is this dynamic/pattern affecting how you relate to people or situations?
- Is it working for you?
- Can you change it or are you willing to change it?
- Whatever you decide to do the dreams will provide you with a feedback loop. Commenting on the efficacy of the choices you are making and constantly correcting you on your journey to wholeness.

**“The secret of my success is I am always wrong.”**

George Soros billionaire and international philanthropist, explaining that being able to realise and admit his faults he is able to correct them.

Ultimately you decide whether you need, want or are ready to transform. The key though to transformation if you do decide to pursue it is course correction and this is where the real genius of dream work comes in. Dreams are guides to areas which need work in your own psyche. If you pay careful attention to your dreams they will tell you where you are going wrong, this allows you to course correct. By constantly doing this your actions and life are constantly refined as you circumambulate the centre of your being getting ever closer to yourself.

Dreams are a map showing the astute observer the path they are on, how that path may have diverged from the one they are meant to travel, and what pitfalls and treasures lie ahead. Dreams are a tool to the realisation of your individuation (optimal destiny).



## Appendix

## Dream Interpretation

***An example of dream interpretation from Sigmund Freud***

I have included what is possibly the most famous dream in the history of depth psychology. A dream of Freud's known as Irma's injection. There was an evolution in Jung of the meaning of dreams beyond wish fulfillment which is the central technique which Freud employs. And I hope that I have conveyed some of these later ideas to you in the brief guide above.

Nevertheless I include this because it is an interesting read if one is genuinely interested in dream interpretation and gives the best example I have ever come across of how to go about the process of building associations.



***The following is an extract from the book *The Interpretation of Dreams*, by Sigmund Freud (Originally published in 1900).***

***Preamble***

During the summer of 1895 I had been giving psycho-analytic treatment to a young lady who was on very friendly terms with me and my family. It will be readily understood that a mixed relationship such as this may be a source of many disturbed feelings in a physician and particularly in a psychotherapist. While the physician's personal interest is greater, his authority is less; any failure would bring a threat to the old-established friendship with the patient's family. This treatment had ended in a partial success; the patient was relieved of her hysterical anxiety but did not lose all her somatic symptoms. At that time I was not yet quite clear in my mind as to the criteria indicating that a hysterical case history was finally closed, and I proposed a solution to the patient which she seemed unwilling to accept. While we were thus at variance, we had broken off the treatment for the summer vacation.—One day I had a visit from a junior colleague, one of my oldest friends, who

had been staying with my patient, Irma, and her family at their country resort. I asked him how he had found her and he answered: 'She's better, but not quite well.' I was conscious that my friend Otto's words, or the tone in which he spoke them, annoyed me. I fancied I detected a reproach in them, such as to the effect that I had promised the patient too much; and, whether rightly or wrongly, I attributed the supposed fact of Otto's siding against me to the influence of my patient's relatives, who, as it seemed to me, had never looked with favour on the treatment. However, my disagreeable impression was not clear to me and I gave no outward sign of it. The same evening I wrote out Irma's case history, with the idea of giving it to Dr. M. (a common friend who was at that time the leading figure in our circle) in order to justify myself. That night (or more probably the next morning) I had the following dream, which I noted down immediately after waking.

**DREAM OF JULY 23RD—24TH, 1895**

A large hall—numerous guests, whom we were receiving.—Among them was Irma. I at once took her on one side, as though to answer her letter and to reproach



## Appendix

## Dream Interpretation



her for not having accepted my 'solution' yet. I said to her: 'If you still get pains, it's really only your fault.' She replied: 'If you only knew what pains I've got now in my throat and stomach and abdomen—it's choking me' —I was alarmed and looked at her. She looked pale and puffy. I thought to myself that after all I must be missing some organic trouble. I took her to the window and looked down her throat, and she showed signs of recalcitrance, like women with artificial dentures. I thought to myself that there was really no need for her to do that.—She then opened her mouth properly and on the right I found a big white patch; at another place I saw extensive whitish grey scabs upon some remarkable curly structures which were evidently modelled on the turbinal bones of the nose.—I at once called in Dr. M., and he repeated the examination and confirmed it. ... Dr. M. looked quite different from usual; he was very pale, he walked with a limp and his chin was clean-shaven.... My friend Otto was now standing beside her as well, and my friend Leopold was percussing her through her bodice and saying: 'She has a dull area low down on the left.' He also indicated that a portion of the skin on the left shoulder was infiltrated.(I noticed this, just as he did, in spite of her dress.) ... M. said: 'There's no doubt it's an infection, but no matter; dysentery will supervene and the toxin will be eliminated.' ... We were directly aware, too, of the origin of the infection. Not long before, when she was feeling unwell, my friend Otto had given her an injection of a preparation of propyl, propyls ... propionic acid ... trimethylamin (and I saw before me the formula for this printed in heavy type) ... Injections of that sort ought not to be made so thoughtlessly...

And probably the syringe had not been clean.

This dream has one advantage over many others. It was immediately clear what events of the previous day provided its starting-point. My preamble makes that plain. The news which Otto had given me of Irma's condition and the case history which I had been engaged in writing till far into the night continued to occupy my mental activity even after I was asleep. Nevertheless, no one who had only read the preamble and the content of the dream itself could have the slightest notion of what the dream meant. I myself had no notion. I was astonished at the symptoms of which Irma complained to me in the dream, since they were not the same as those for which I had treated her. I smiled at the senseless idea of an injection of propionic acid and at Dr. M.'s consoling reflections. Towards its end the dream seemed to me to be more obscure and compressed than it was at the beginning. In order to discover the meaning of all this it was necessary to undertake a detailed analysis.

**ANALYSIS**

The hall—numerous guests, whom we were receiving. We were spending that summer at Bellevue, a house standing by itself on one of the hills adjoining the Kahlenberg. The house had formerly been designed as a place of entertainment and its reception-rooms were in consequence unusually lofty and hall-like. It was at Bellevue that I had the dream, a few days before my wife's birthday. On the previous day my wife had told me that she expected that a number of friends, including

## Appendix

## Dream Interpretation

Irma, would be coming out to visit us on her birthday. My dream was thus anticipating this occasion: it was my wife's birthday and a number of guests, including Irma, were being received by us in the large hall at Bellevue. I reproached Irma for not having accepted my solution; I said: 'If you still get pains, it's your own fault,' I might have said this to her in waking life, and I may actually have done so. It was my view at that time (though I have since recognized it as a wrong one) that my task was fulfilled when I had informed a patient of the hidden meaning of his symptoms: I considered that I was not responsible for whether he accepted the solution or not—though this was what success depended on. I owe it to this mistake, which I have now fortunately corrected, that my life was made easier at a time when, in spite of

all my inevitable ignorance, I was expected to produce therapeutic successes.—I noticed, however, that the words which I spoke to Irma in the dream showed that I was specially anxious not to be responsible for the pains which she still had. If they were her fault they could not be mine. Could it be that the purpose of the dream lay in this direction?

Irma's complaint: pains in her throat and abdomen and stomach; it was choking her. Pains in the stomach were among my patient's symptoms but were not very prominent; she complained more of feelings of nausea and disgust. Pains in the throat and abdomen and constriction of the throat played scarcely any part in her illness. I wondered why I decided upon this choice of symptoms in the dream but could not think of an explanation at the moment.

She looked pale and puffy. My patient always had a rosy complexion. I began to suspect that someone else was being substituted for her.

I was alarmed at the idea that I had missed an organic illness. This, as may well be believed, is a perpetual source of anxiety to a specialist whose practice is almost limited to neurotic patients and who is in the habit of attributing to hysteria a great number of symptoms which other physicians treat as organic. On the other hand, a faint doubt crept into my mind—from where, I could not tell—that my alarm was not entirely genuine. If Irma's pains had an organic basis, once again I could not be held responsible for curing them; my treatment only



set out to get rid of hysterical pains. It occurred to me, in fact, that I was actually wishing that there had been a wrong diagnosis; for, if so, the blame for my lack of success would also have been got rid of.

I took her to the window to look down her throat. She showed some recalcitrance, like women with false teeth. I thought to myself that really there was no need for her to do that. I had never had any occasion to examine Irma's oral cavity. What happened in the dream reminded me of an examination I had carried out some time before of a governess: at a first glance she had seemed a picture of youthful beauty, but when it came to opening her mouth she had taken measures to conceal her plates. This led to recollections of other





## Appendix

## Dream Interpretation

medical examinations and of little secrets revealed in the course of them—to the satisfaction of neither party. ‘There was really no need for her to do that’ was no doubt intended in the first place as a compliment to Irma; but I suspected that it had another meaning besides. (If one carries out an analysis attentively, one gets a feeling of whether or not one has exhausted all the background thoughts that are to be expected.) The way in which Irma stood by the window suddenly reminded me of another experience. Irma had an intimate woman friend of whom I had a very high opinion. When I visited this lady one evening I had found her by a window in the situation reproduced in the dream, and her physician, the same Dr. M., had pronounced that she had a diphtheritic membrane.

The figure of Dr. M. and the membrane reappear later in the dream. It now occurred to me that for the last few months I had had every reason to suppose that this other lady was also a hysteric. Indeed, Irma herself had betrayed the fact to me. What did I know of her condition? One thing precisely: that, like my Irma of the dream, she suffered from hysterical choking. So in the dream I had replaced my patient by her friend. I now recollected that I had often played with the idea that she too might ask me to relieve her of her symptoms. I myself, however, had thought this unlikely, since she was of a very reserved nature. She was recalcitrant, as was shown in the dream. Another reason was that there was no need for her to do it: she had so far shown herself strong enough to master her condition without outside help. There still remained a few features



that I could not attach either to Irma or to her friend: pale; puffy; false teeth. The false teeth took me to the governess whom I have already mentioned; I now felt inclined to be satisfied with bad teeth. I then thought of someone else to whom these features might be alluding. She again was not one of my patients, nor should I have liked to have her as a patient, since I had noticed that she was bashful in my presence and I could not think she would make an amenable patient. She was usually pale, and once, while she had been in specially good health, she had looked puffy.<sup>1</sup> Thus I had been comparing my patient Irma with two other people who would also have been recalcitrant to treatment. What could the reason have been for my having exchanged her in the dream for her friend? Perhaps it was that I should have liked to exchange her: either I felt more sympathetic towards her friend

The still unexplained complaint about pains in the abdomen could also be traced back to this third figure. The person in question was, of course, my own wife; the pains in the abdomen reminded me of one of the occasions on which I had noticed her bashfulness. I was forced to admit to myself that I was not treating either Irma or my wife very kindly in this dream; but it should be observed by way of excuse that I was measuring them both by the standard of the good and amenable patient.

Or had a higher opinion of her intelligence. For Irma seemed to me foolish because she had not accepted my solution. Her friend would have been wiser, that is

## Appendix

## Dream Interpretation



to say she would have yielded sooner. She would then have opened her mouth properly, and have told me more than Irma.

What I saw in her throat: a white patch and turbinal bones with scabs on them. The white patch reminded me of diphtheritis and so of Irma's friend, but also of a serious illness of my eldest daughter's almost two years earlier and of the fright I had had in those anxious days. The scabs on the turbinal bones recalled a worry about my own state of health. I was making frequent use of cocaine at that time to reduce some troublesome nasal swellings, and I had heard a few days earlier that one of my women patients who had followed my example had developed an extensive necrosis of the nasal mucous membrane. I had been the first to recommend the use of cocaine, in 1885,<sup>2</sup> and this recommendation had brought serious reproaches down on me. The misuse of that drug had hastened the death of a dear friend of mine. This had been before 1895 [the date of the dream]. I at once called in Dr. M., and he repeated the examination. This simply corresponded to the position occupied by M. in our circle. But the 'at once' was sufficiently striking to require a special explanation. It reminded me of a tragic event in my practice. I had on one occasion produced a severe toxic state in a woman patient by repeatedly prescribing what was at that time regarded as a harmless remedy (sulphonal), and had hurriedly turned for assistance and support to my experienced senior colleague. There was a subsidiary detail which confirmed the idea that I had this incident in mind. My patient—who succumbed to the poison—

had the same name as my eldest daughter. It had never occurred to me before, but it struck me now almost like an act of retribution on the part of destiny. It was as though the replacement of one person by another was to be continued in another sense: this Mathilde for that Mathilde, an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. It seemed as if I had been collecting all the occasions which I could bring up against myself as evidence of lack of medical conscientiousness.

Dr. M. was pale, had a clean-shaven chin and walked with a limp. This was true to the extent that his unhealthy appearance often caused his friends anxiety. The two other features could only apply to someone else. I thought of my elder brother, who lives abroad, who is clean-shaven and whom, if I remembered right, the M. of the dream closely resembled. We had had news a few days earlier that he was walking with a limp owing to an arthritic affection of his hip. There must, I reflected, have been some reason for my fusing into one the two figures in the dream. I then remembered that I had a similar reason for being in an ill-humour with each of them: they had both rejected a certain suggestion I had recently laid before them.

My friend Otto was now standing beside the patient and my friend Leopold was examining her and indicated that there was a dull area low down on the left. My friend Leopold was also a physician and a relative of Otto's. Since they both specialized in the same branch of medicine, it was their fate to be in competition with each other, and comparisons were constantly



## Appendix

## Dream Interpretation

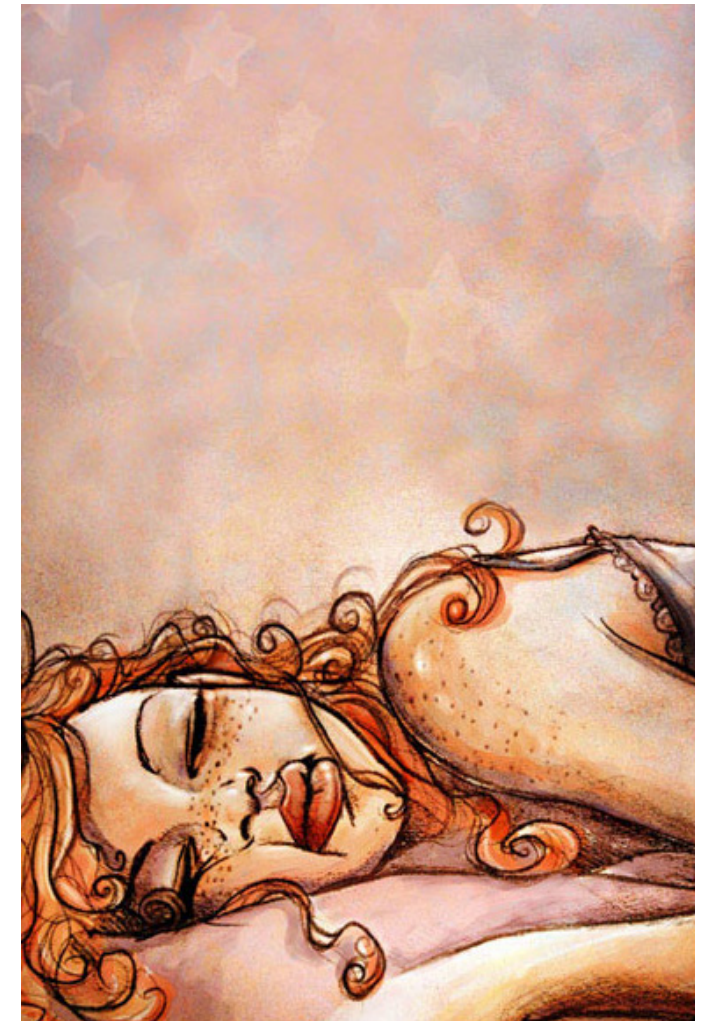
being drawn between them. Both of them acted as my assistants for years while I was still in charge of the neurological out-patients' department of a children's hospital. Scenes such as the one represented in the dream used often to occur there. While I was discussing the diagnosis of a case with Otto, Leopold would be examining the child once more and would make an unexpected contribution to our decision. The difference between their characters was like that between the bailiff Bräsigg and his friend Karl: one was distinguished for his quickness, while the other was slow but sure. If in the dream I was contrasting Otto with the prudent Leopold, I was evidently doing so to the advantage of the latter. The comparison was similar to the one between my disobedient patient Irma and the friend whom I regarded as wiser than she was. I now perceived another of the lines along which the chain of thought in the dream branched off: from the sick child to the children's hospital.—The dull area low down on the left seemed to me to agree in every detail with one particular case in which Leopold had struck me by his thoroughness. I also had a vague notion of something in the nature of a meta-static affection; but this may also have been a reference to the patient whom I should have liked to have in the place of Irma. So far as I had been able to judge, she had produced an imitation of a tuberculosis.

A portion of the skin on the left shoulder was infiltrated. I saw at once that this was the rheumatism in my own shoulder, which I invariably notice if I sit up late into the night. Moreover the wording in the dream was most

ambiguous: 'I noticed this, just as he did. ...' I noticed it in my own body, that is. I was struck, too, by the unusual phrasing: 'a portion of the skin was infiltrated'. We are in the habit of speaking of 'a left upper posterior infiltration', and this would refer to the lung and so once more to tuberculosis.

In spite of her dress. This was in any case only an interpolation. We naturally used to examine the children in the hospital undressed: and this would be a contrast to the manner in which adult female patients have to be examined. I remembered that it was said of a celebrated clinician that he never made a physical examination of his patients except through their clothes. Further than this I could not see. Frankly, I had no desire to penetrate more deeply at this point.

Dr. M. said: 'It's an infection, but no matter. Dysentery will supervene and the toxin will be eliminated.' At first this struck me as ridiculous. But nevertheless, like all the rest, it had to be carefully analysed. When I came to look at it more closely it seemed to have some sort of meaning all the same. What I discovered in the patient was a local diphtheritis. I remembered from the time of my daughter's illness a discussion on diphtheritis and diphtheria, the latter being the general infection that arises from the local diphtheritis. Leopold indicated the presence of a general infection of this kind from the existence of a dull area, which might thus be regarded as a metastatic focus. I seemed to think, it is true, that metastases like this do not in fact occur with diphtheria: it made me think rather of pyaemia.



## Appendix

## Dream Interpretation

No matter. This was intended as a consolation. It seemed to fit into the context as follows. The content of the preceding part of the dream had been that my patient's pains were due to a severe organic affection. I had a feeling that I was only trying in that way to shift the blame from myself. Psychological treatment could not be held responsible for the persistence of diphtheritic pains. Nevertheless I had a sense of awkwardness at having invented such a severe illness for Irma simply in order to clear myself. It looked so cruel. Thus I was in need of an assurance that all would be well in the end, and it seemed to me that to have put the consolation into the mouth precisely of Dr. M. had not been a bad choice. But here I was taking up a superior attitude towards the dream, and this itself required explanation. And why was the consolation so nonsensical?



Dysentery. There seemed to be some remote theoretical notion that morbid matter can be eliminated through the bowels. Could it be that I was trying to make fun of Dr. M.'s fertility in producing far-fetched explanations and making unexpected pathological connections? Something else now occurred to me in relation to dysentery. A few months earlier I had taken on the case of a young man with remarkable difficulties associated with defaecating, who had been treated by other physicians as a case of 'anaemia accompanied by malnutrition'. I had recognized it as a hysteria, but had been unwilling to try him with my psychotherapeutic treatment and had sent him on a sea voyage. Some days before, I had had a despairing letter from him from Egypt, saying that he had had a fresh attack there which a doctor had declared was dysentery. I suspected that the diagnosis was an error on the part of an ignorant practitioner who had allowed himself to be taken in by the hysteria. But I could not help reproaching myself for having put my patient in a situation in which he might have contracted some organic trouble on top of his hysterical intestinal disorder. Moreover 'dysentery' sounds not unlike 'diphtheria'—a word of ill omen which did not occur in the dream.

Yes, I thought to myself, I must have been making fun of Dr. M. with the consoling prognosis 'Dysentery will supervene, etc.': for it came back to me that, years before, he himself had told an amusing story of a similar kind about another doctor. Dr. M. had been called in by him for consultation over a patient who was seriously ill, and had felt obliged to point out, in view of the

very optimistic view taken by his colleague, that he had found albumen in the patient's urine. The other, however, was not in the least put out: 'No matter', he had said, 'the albumen will soon be eliminated!' — I could no longer feel any doubt, therefore, that this part of the dream was expressing derision at physicians who are ignorant of hysteria. And, as though to confirm this, a further idea crossed my mind: 'Does Dr. M. realize that the symptoms in his patient (Irma's friend) which give grounds for fearing tuberculosis also have a hysterical basis? Has he spotted this hysteria? or has he been taken in by it?'

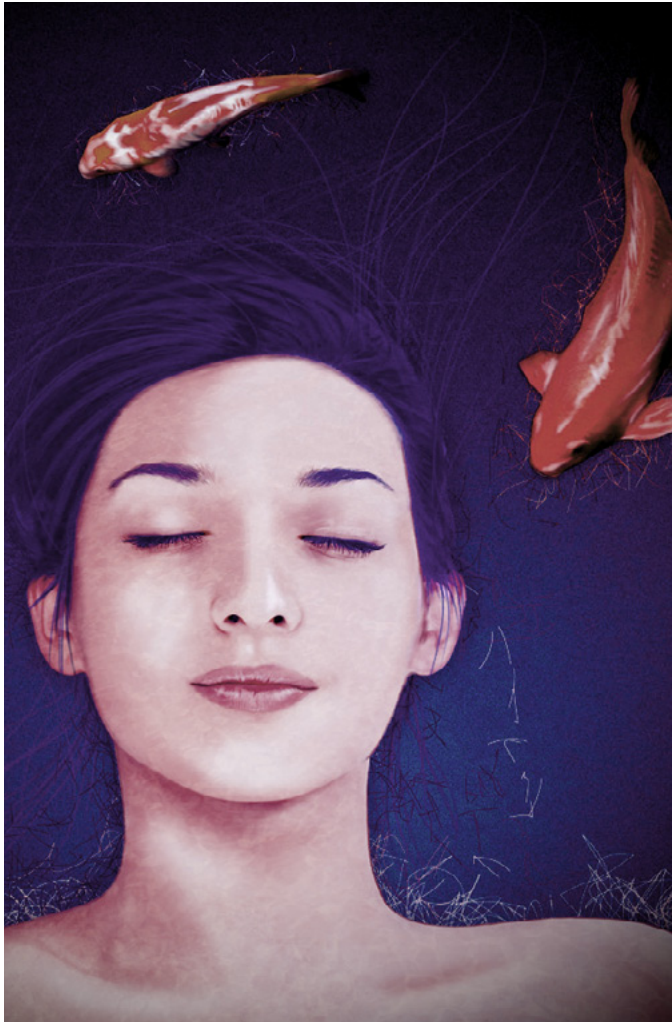


But what could be my motive for treating this friend of mine so badly? That was a very simple matter. Dr. M. was just as little in agreement with my 'solution' as Irma



## Appendix

## Dream Interpretation



herself. So I had already revenged myself in this dream on two people: on Irma with the words 'If you still get pains, it's your own fault', and on Dr. M. by the wording of the nonsensical consolation that I put into his mouth. We were directly aware of the origin of the infection. This direct knowledge in the dream was remarkable. Only just before we had had no knowledge of it, for the infection was only revealed by Leopold.

When she was feeling unwell, my friend Otto had given her an injection. Otto had in fact told me that during his short stay with Irma's family he had been called in to a neighbouring hotel to give an injection to someone who had suddenly felt unwell. These injections reminded me once more of my unfortunate friend who had poisoned himself with cocaine. I had advised him to use the drug internally [i.e. orally] only, while morphia was being withdrawn; but he had at once given himself cocaine injections.

A preparation of propyl... propyls ... propionic acid. How could I have come to think of this? During the previous evening, before I wrote out the case history and had the dream, my wife had opened a bottle of liqueur, on which the word 'Ananas' appeared and which was a gift from our friend Otto: for he has a habit of making presents on every possible occasion. It was to be hoped, I thought to myself, that some day he would find a wife to cure him of the habit. This liqueur gave off such a strong smell of fusel oil that I refused to touch it. My wife suggested our giving the bottle to the servants, but I—with even greater prudence—vetoed the suggestion, adding in a

philanthropic spirit that there was no need for them to be poisoned either. The smell of fusel oil (amyl ...) evidently stirred up in my mind a recollection of the whole series—propyl, methyl, and so on—and this accounted for the propyl preparation in the dream. It is true that I carried out a substitution in the process: I dreamt of propyl after having smelt amyl. But substitutions of this kind are perhaps legitimate in organic chemistry.

Trimethylamin. I saw the chemical formula of this substance in my dream, which bears witness to a great effort on the part of my memory. Moreover the formula was printed in heavy type, as though there had been a desire to lay emphasis on some part of the context as being of quite special importance. What was it, then, to which my attention was to be directed in this way by trimethylamin? It was to a conversation with another friend who had for many years been familiar with all my writings during the period of their gestation, just as I had been with his. He had at that time confided some ideas to me on the subject of the chemistry of the sexual processes, and had mentioned among other things that he believed that one of the products of sexual metabolism was trimethylamin. Thus this substance led me to sexuality, the factor to which I attributed the greatest importance in the origin of the nervous disorders which it was my aim to cure. My patient Irma was a young widow; if I wanted to find an excuse for the failure of my treatment in her case, what I could best appeal to would no doubt be this fact of her widowhood, which her friends would be so glad to see changed. And how strangely, I thought to myself, a dream like this is put

## Appendix

## Dream Interpretation



together! The other woman, whom I had as a patient in the dream instead of Irma, was also a young widow. I began to guess why the formula for trimethylamin had been so prominent in the dream. So many important subjects converged upon that one word. Trimethylamin was an allusion not only to the immensely powerful factor of sexuality, but also to a person whose agreement I recalled with satisfaction whenever I felt isolated in my opinions. Surely this friend who played so large a part in my life must appear again elsewhere in these trains of thought. Yes. For he had a special

knowledge of the consequences of affections of the nose and its accessory cavities; and he had drawn scientific attention to some very remarkable connections between the turbinal bones and the female organs of sex. (Cf. the three curly structures in Irma's throat.) I had had Irma examined by him to see whether her gastric pains might be of nasal origin. But he suffered himself from suppurative rhinitis, which caused me anxiety; and no doubt there was an allusion to this in the pyaemia which vaguely came into my mind in connection with the metastases in the dream.

Injections of that sort ought not to be made so thoughtlessly. Here an accusation of thoughtlessness was being made directly against my friend Otto. I seemed to remember thinking something of the same kind that afternoon when his words and looks had appeared to show that he was siding against me. It had been some such notion as: 'How easily his thoughts are influenced! How thoughtlessly he jumps to conclusions!'—Apart from this, this sentence in the dream reminded me once more of my dead friend who had so hastily resorted to cocaine injections. As I have said, I had never contemplated the drug being given by injection. I noticed too that in accusing Otto of thoughtlessness in handling chemical substances I was once more touching upon the story of the unfortunate Mathilde, which gave grounds for the same accusation against myself. Here I was evidently collecting instances of my conscientiousness, but also of the reverse.

And probably the syringe had not been clean. This was yet another accusation against Otto, but derived from a different source. I had happened the day before to meet the son of an old lady of eighty-two, to whom I had to give an injection of morphia twice a day.<sup>1</sup> At the moment she was in the country and he told me that she was suffering from phlebitis. I had at once thought it must be an infiltration caused by a dirty syringe. I was proud of the fact that in two years I had not caused a single infiltration; I took constant pains to be sure that the syringe was clean. In short, I was conscientious. The phlebitis brought me back once more to my wife, who had suffered from thrombosis during one of her



## Appendix

## Dream Interpretation



pregnancies; and now three similar situations came to my recollection involving my wife, Irma and the dead Mathilde. The identity of these situations had evidently enabled me to substitute the three figures for one another in the dream.

I have now completed the interpretation of the dream. While I was carrying it out I had some difficulty in keeping at bay all the ideas which were bound to be provoked by a comparison between the content of the dream and the concealed thoughts lying behind it. And in the meantime the 'meaning' of the dream was borne in upon me. I became aware of an intention which was carried into effect by the dream and which must have been my motive for dreaming it. The dream fulfilled certain wishes which were started in me by the events of the previous evening (the news given me by Otto and my writing out of the case history). The conclusion of the dream, that is to say, was that I was not responsible for the persistence of Irma's pains, but that Otto was. Otto had in fact annoyed me by his remarks about Irma's incomplete cure, and the dream gave me my revenge by throwing the reproach back on to him. The dream acquitted me of the responsibility for Irma's condition by showing that it was due to other factors—it produced a whole series of reasons. The dream represented a particular state of affairs as I should have wished it to be. Thus its content was the fulfilment of a wish and its motive was a wish.

Thus much leapt to the eyes. But many of the details of the dream also became intelligible to me from the

point of view of wish-fulfilment. Not only did I revenge myself on Otto for being too hasty in taking sides against me by representing him as being too hasty in his medical treatment (in giving the injection); but I also revenged myself on him for giving me the bad liqueur which had an aroma of fusel oil. And in the dream I found an expression which united the two reproaches: the injection was of a preparation of propyl. This did not satisfy me and I pursued my revenge further by contrasting him with his more trustworthy competitor. I seemed to be saying: 'I like him better than you.' But Otto was not the only person to suffer from the vials of my wrath. I took revenge as well on my disobedient patient by exchanging her for one who was wiser and less recalcitrant. Nor did I allow Dr. M. to escape the consequences of his contradiction but showed him by means of a clear allusion that he was an ignoramus on the subject. ('Dysentery will supervene, etc.'). Indeed I seemed to be appealing from him to someone else with greater knowledge (to my friend who had told me of trimethylamin) just as I had turned from Irma to her friend and from Otto to Leopold. 'Take these people away! Give me three others of my choice instead! Then I shall be free of these undeserved reproaches!' The groundlessness of the reproaches was proved for me in the dream in the most elaborate fashion. I was not to blame for Irma's pains, since she herself was to blame for them by refusing to accept my solution. I was not concerned with Irma's pains, since they were of an organic nature and quite incurable by psychological treatment. Irma's pains could be satisfactorily explained by her widowhood (cf. the trimethylamin) which I

## Appendix

## Dream Interpretation



had no means of altering. Irma's pains had been caused by Otto giving her an incautious injection of an unsuitable drug—a thing I should never have done. Irma's pains were the result of an injection with a dirty needle, like my old lady's phlebitis—whereas I never did any harm with my injections. I noticed, it is true, that these explanations of Irma's pains (which agreed in exculpating me) were not entirely consistent with one another, and indeed that they were mutually exclusive. The whole plea—for the dream was nothing else—reminded one vividly of the defence put forward by the man who was charged by one of his neighbours with having given him back a borrowed kettle in a damaged condition. The defendant asserted first, that he had given it back undamaged; secondly, that the kettle had a hole in it when he borrowed it; and thirdly, that he had never borrowed a kettle from his neighbour at all. So much the better: if only a single one of these three lines of defence were to be accepted as valid, the man would have to be acquitted.

Certain other themes played a part in the dream, which were not so obviously connected with my exculpation from Irma's illness: my daughter's illness and that of my patient who bore the same name, the

injurious effect of cocaine, the disorder of my patient who was travelling in Egypt, my concern about my wife's health and about that of my brother and of Dr. M., my own physical ailments, my anxiety about my absent friend who suffered from suppurative rhinitis. But when I came to consider all of these, they could all be collected into a single group of ideas and labelled, as it were, 'concern about my own and other people's health—professional conscientiousness'. I called to mind the obscure disagreeable impression I had had when Otto brought me the news of Irma's condition. This group of thoughts that played a part in the dream enabled me retrospectively to put this transient impression into words. It was as though he had said to me: 'You don't take your medical duties seriously enough. You're not conscientious; you don't carry out what you've undertaken.' Thereupon, this group of thoughts seemed to have put itself at my disposal, so that I could produce evidence of how highly conscientious I was, of how deeply I was concerned about the health of my relations, my friends and my patients. It was a noteworthy fact that this material also included some disagreeable memories, which supported my friend Otto's accusation rather than my own vindication. The material was, as one might

say, impartial; but nevertheless there was an unmistakable connection between this more extensive group of thoughts which underlay the dream and the narrower subject of the dream which gave rise to the wish to be innocent of Irma's illness.

I will not pretend that I have completely uncovered the meaning of this dream or that its interpretation is without a gap. I could spend much more time over it, derive further information from it and discuss fresh problems raised by it. I myself know the points from which further trains of thought could be followed. But considerations which arise in the case of every dream of my own restrain me from pursuing my interpretative work. If anyone should feel tempted to express a hasty condemnation of my reticence, I would advise him to make the experiment of being franker than I am. For the moment I am satisfied with the achievement of this one piece of fresh knowledge. If we adopt the method of interpreting dreams which I have indicated here, we shall find that dreams really have a meaning and are far from being the expression of a fragmentary activity of the brain, as the authorities have claimed. *When the work of interpretation has been completed, we perceive that a dream is the fulfilment of a wish.*