

Amendment to: Binswanger and Wittmann (2019): Re-considering Freud's dream theory. International Journal of Dream Research Volume 12 (1), 103-111.

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Our paper aimed at facilitating the understanding and handling of Freud's dream theory. We are grateful for critical comments on our contribution by Volker Hartmann which prompt us to differentiate more explicitly between verbal and perceptual representations of the latent dream thought within Freud's dream theory. We will thus integrate the differentiation between the following two concepts in our previous arguments:

1. *The unconscious formation of the preconscious and verbal latent dream thought:* The dream work by the unconscious ego replaces the sleep-disturbing stimuli – demands upon the ego – by a harmless preconscious wish-fulfilment that still has a verbal form, called latent dream thought. This process is dominated by the different defense-mechanisms of the ego, including displacement, condensation, reversal to the contrary and symbolization.
2. *The transformation of the verbal dream-thought into a perception of things:* Dream work continues by transforming – in a regressive cerebral direction – the verbal latent dream-thought into hallucinatory perceptions of things. This process is dominated by considerations of representability. What comes out is a preconscious sensory perception of the latent dream thought, characterized by the primary process functioning of the unconscious ego. In this form, it is still incompatible with secondary process functioning of the conscious ego.

This distinction allows for a further clarification of the term secondary revision:

3. The sensory perception of the latent dream thought undergoes – as every sensory perception – secondary revision by the preconscious ego, forming the manifest dream content, characterized by the secondary process. In this form, the manifest dream content is compatible with the conscious ego.

These three steps are in accordance with Freud's summary given in *A Metapsychological Supplement to the Theory of Dreams* (Freud 1917):

“We call this kind of regression a topographical one. (...) The reversal of the course of the excitation from the Pcs. through the Ucs. to perception is at the same time a re-

turn to the early stage of hallucinatory wish-fulfilment. (...) In this process thoughts are transformed into images, mainly of a visual sort; that is to say, word-presentations are taken back to the thing-presentations which correspond to them, as if, in general, the process were dominated by considerations of representability” (p. 227-228, emphasis RB/LW).

“The completion of the dream-process consists in the thought-content – regressively transformed and worked over into a wishful phantasy – becoming conscious as a sensory perception; while this is happening it undergoes secondary revision, to which every perceptual concept is subject” (p. 229, emphasis RB/LW).

Furthermore, the three steps are partly in concordance with a summary of Freud's second conflict model of dream formation as proposed by Gilmore and Nersessian (1999, p. 229).

Consequences

We presented the results of our considerations in three different forms:

1. As a text, comparable to a summary;
2. As a graphic;
3. As an enumeration of the key characteristics of the re-considered Freudian dream theory.

We repeat these three forms with the amendments underlined.

As a Text

During sleep, *ego-control* is weakened and access of impulses to the volitional motor brain zones is inhibited. Such impulses consist of *demands* upon the ego which can be delineated into two types. The first is a demand for the *satisfaction of a drive from the id* that becomes preconscious. The second is a demand for the solution of a conflict, the removal of a doubt or the realization of a resolution, i.e. *preconscious concerns* of the ego that are reinforced by an unconscious element. These demands are the mental sleep-disturbing stimuli that would awake the sleeper if they passed unprocessed to the conscious ego. Hence, the *dream work done by the unconscious ego censors them* with its main *defense mechanisms*: displacement, condensation, reversal to the contrary (we add this mechanism as Freud (1900, p. 381,327-328, 408, 434, 440, 471-481) frequently mentions it when illustrating dream work), and symbolization. The result of this work is the *verbally represented* latent dream-thought. It *replaces* the sleep-disturbing stimulus by the *harmless fulfillment of a wish*. Dream work continues by

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transforming the verbal latent dream-thought into hallucinatory perceptions of things, applying considerations of representability. At this point, for the *unconscious* ego that functions and understands according to the primary process, the task is done: It got rid of the demands upon the ego that would be incompatible with the continuation of sleep. Conversely, for the *conscious* ego, which is operating according to the secondary process and the principle of reality, the result of the primary process is still not compatible with the continuation of sleep. It may be too absurd, puzzling or frightening, or it still might reveal aspects of the sleep-disturbing stimulus. Hence, the preconscious sensory perception of the latent dream thought has to be transformed into a more elaborated plot that befits the secondary process. Freud calls this operation *secondary revision* that finally forms the manifest dream content. It appears to fit with the comprehensive realm of Freud's theory to attribute this work to the preconscious ego. The better and smoother the manifest dream is formed, the better dream censorship and secondary revision have worked, and the better the dream fulfills its function as a guardian of sleep.

As a Graphic

See Figure 1.

As Conclusion

1. The process of dream generation is instigated by a stimulus implying a demand upon the ego incompatible with the continuation of sleep. While psychoanalytic theory focuses on internal, mental sleep-disturbing stimuli originating either from the id (libidinous or aggressive impulses striving for satisfaction) or from the ego (preconscious concerns reinforced by an unconscious element), also external, sensory stimuli are recognized.
2. The *function* of the hallucinatory experiences remembered as dreams is sleep-protection.

3. Wish-fulfillment is the *means* to achieve this function. Wish-fulfillment is a compromise between the sleep-disturbing stimulus and the ego's interest to continue sleep. The result of the compromise must be ego-compatible and harmless enough to allow continuation of sleep.
4. Dream work consists of the unconscious processing of preconscious material (external or internal sleep-disturbing stimuli). It is performed by the unconscious ego that operates according to the primary process. Its main mechanisms are displacement, condensation, reversal to the contrary, and symbolization.
5. Dream work replaces the sleep-disturbing stimuli by harmless preconscious wish-fulfillment that still has a verbal form, called latent dream thought.
6. Dream work continues by transforming the verbal latent dream-thought into hallucinatory perceptions of things, applying considerations of representability. What comes out is a preconscious sensory perception of the latent dream thought, characterized by the primary process functioning of the unconscious ego. In this form, it is still incompatible with secondary process functioning of the conscious ego.
7. While this is happening, the preconscious sensory perception of the latent dream thought undergoes – as every sensory perception – secondary revision by the preconscious ego. It transforms the preconscious perception of the latent dream thought into a more elaborated plot – the manifest dream content – that befits the conscious ego operating according to the principle of reality.
8. If the result of the previous steps does not succeed in replacing the sleep-disturbing stimulus by a sufficiently harmless fulfillment of a wish and its elaboration according to the secondary process/principle of reality, the manifest dream content evokes anxiety potentially resulting in awakening (failure of the function of sleep protection in form of a nightmare).
9. Freud's expression "a residue of preconscious activity in waking life" designating a part of a sleep-disturbing

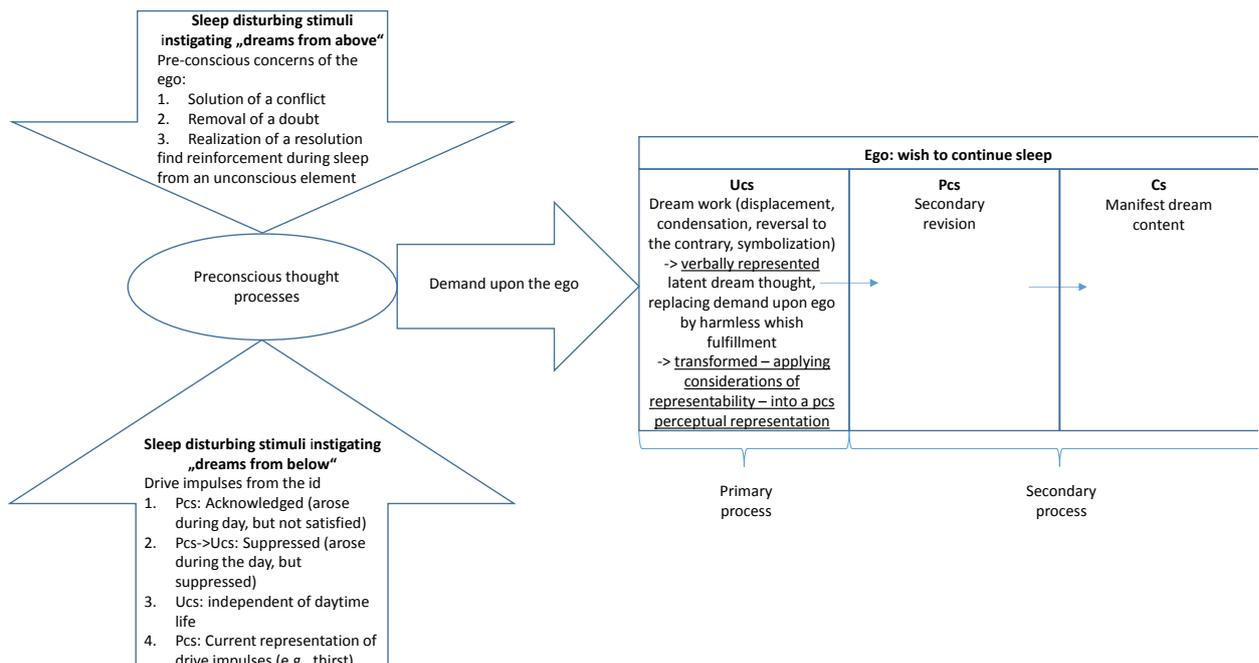


Figure 1. Re-formulated dream theory according to Freud (1938). Pcs: preconscious; Ucs: unconscious; Cs: conscious

stimulus causes confusions with his term “day’s residue”. We suggest using the latter one only when referring to contents appearing explicitly in the manifest dream.

10. The proposed understanding of Freud’s dream theory (wish-fulfillment as related to the end rather than to the beginning of dream work) expands the possibilities of its application in clinical practice, without revising Freud’s theory of the wish-fulfilling function of dreams.
11. Empirical dream research testing psychoanalytic assumptions has revealed intriguing results but needs to be intensified.

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