

The Interpretation of Dreams

Sigmund Freud (1900)



PREFACE TO THE THIRD EDITION

Whereas there was a space of nine years between the first and second editions of this book, the need of a third edition was apparent when little more than a year had elapsed. I ought to be gratified by this change; but if I was unwilling previously to attribute the neglect of my work to its small value, I cannot take the interest which is now making its appearance as proof of its quality.

The advance of scientific knowledge has not left *The Interpretation of Dreams* untouched. When I wrote this book in 1899 there was as yet no "sexual theory," and the analysis of the more complicated forms of the psychoneuroses was still in its infancy. The interpretation of dreams was intended as an expedient to facilitate the psychological analysis of the neuroses; but since then a profounder understanding of the neuroses has contributed towards the comprehension of the dream. The doctrine of dream-interpretation itself has evolved in a direction which was insufficiently emphasized in the first edition of this book. From my own experience, and the works of Stekel and other writers, [\[1\]](#) I have since learned to appreciate more accurately the significance of symbolism in dreams (or rather, in unconscious thought). In the course of years, a mass of data has accumulated which demands consideration. I have endeavored to deal with these innovations by interpolations in the text and

footnotes. If these additions do not always quite adjust themselves to the framework of the treatise, or if the earlier text does not everywhere come up to the standard of our present knowledge, I must beg indulgence for this deficiency, since it is only the result and indication of the increasingly rapid advance of our science. I will even venture to predict the directions in which further editions of this book - should there be a demand for them - may diverge from previous editions. Dream-interpretation must seek a closer union with the rich material of poetry, myth, and popular idiom, and it must deal more faithfully than has hitherto been possible with the relations of dreams to the neuroses and to mental derangement.

Herr Otto Rank has afforded me valuable assistance in the selection of supplementary examples, and has revised the proofs of this edition. I have to thank him and many other colleagues for their contributions and corrections.

Vienna, 1911 -

[1] Omitted in subsequent editions.

PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

That there should have been a demand for a second edition of this book - a book which cannot be described as easy to read - before the completion of its first decade is not to be explained by the interest of the professional circles to which I was addressing myself. My psychiatric colleagues have not, apparently, attempted to look beyond the astonishment which may at first have been aroused by my novel conception of the dream; and the professional philosophers, who are anyhow accustomed to disposing of the dream in a few sentences - mostly the same - as a supplement to the states of consciousness, have evidently failed to realize that precisely in this connection it was possible to make all manner of deductions, such as must lead to a fundamental modification of our psychological doctrines. The attitude of the scientific reviewers was such to lead me to expect that the fate of the book would be to fall into oblivion; and the little flock of faithful adherents, who follow my lead in the therapeutic application of psycho-analysis, and interpret dreams by my method, could not have exhausted the first edition of this book. I feel, therefore, that my thanks are due to the wider circle of cultured and inquiring readers whose sympathy has induced me, after the lapse of nine years, once more to take up this difficult work, which has so many fundamental bearings.

I am glad to be able to say that I found little in the book that called for alteration. Here and there I have interpolated fresh material, or have added opinions based on more extensive experience, or I have sought to elaborate individual points; but the essential passages treating of dreams and their interpretation, and the psychological doctrines to be deduced therefrom, have been left unaltered; subjectively, at all events, they have stood the test of time. Those who are acquainted with my other writings (on the aetiology and mechanism of the psychoneuroses) will know that I never offer unfinished work as finished, and that I have always endeavoured to revise my conclusions in accordance with my maturing opinions; but as regards the subject of the dream-life, I am able to stand by my original text. In my many years' work upon the problems of the neuroses I have often hesitated, and I have often gone astray; and then it was always the interpretation of dreams that restored my self-confidence. My many scientific opponents are actuated by a wise instinct when they decline to follow me into the region of oneirology.

Even the material of this book, even my own dreams, defaced by time or superseded, by means of which I have demonstrated the rules of dream-interpretation, revealed, when I came to revise these pages, a continuity that resisted revision. For me, of course, this book has an additional subjective significance, which I did not understand until after its completion. It reveals itself to me as a piece of my self-analysis, as my reaction to the death of my father, that is, to the most important event, the most poignant loss in a man's life. Once I had realized this, I felt that I could not obliterate the traces of this influence. But to my readers the material from which they learn to evaluate and interpret dreams will be a matter of indifference.

Where an inevitable comment could not be fitted into the old context, I have indicated by square brackets that it does not occur in the first edition.[2]

Berchtesgaden, 1908 -

[2] Omitted in subsequent editions.

INTRODUCTORY NOTE (to the first edition)

In this volume I have attempted to expound the methods and results of dream-interpretation; and in so doing I do not think I have overstepped the boundary of neuro-pathological science. For the dream proves on psychological investigation to be the first of a series of abnormal psychic formations, a series whose succeeding members - the hysterical phobias, the obsessions, the delusions - must, for practical reasons, claim the attention of the physician. The dream, as we shall see, has no title to such practical importance, but for that very reason its theoretical value as a typical formation is all the greater, and the physician who cannot explain the origin of dream-images will strive in vain to understand the phobias and the obsessive and delusional ideas, or to influence them by therapeutic methods.