

Freudian interpretation of dreams essay examples

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\n[[toc title="Table of Contents"](#)]\n

\n \t

1. [Introduction](#) \n \t
2. [Psychic Reality](#) \n \t
3. [Regression](#) \n \t
4. [Wish-Fulfillment](#) \n \t
5. [Primary and Secondary Process](#) \n \t
6. [Conclusion](#) \n \t
7. [References](#) \n

\n[/toc]\n \n

Introduction

Sigmund Freud emphasizes the importance of the psychoanalytic value of dreams tremendously. He is of the opinion that dreams give a useful insight into the unconscious mind of a dreamer. His fascination with dreams shows in his keeping a diary during his childhood and he has used many of the ideas and dreams written on the pages of his diary while composing his most famous publication 'The Interpretation of Dreams'. Freud believes that dreams are an attempt to fulfill wishes by the id, especially those wishes which remain unfulfilled in the waking life due to various reasons. Because the longings and desires of id are objectionable in nature, the id in order to deceive the superego disguises its wishes in symbolism. Thus, a dream has both manifest and latent content. Manifest content refers to the actual storyline of a dream whereas latent content implies the undercurrent meaning. Further, according to Freud, dreams are manifestation of our unconscious desires which in collaboration with the conscious mind rise to

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the surface of our psyche. Relating the unconscious with psychic reality Freud states in the fifth chapter of his book " The unconscious is the true psychological reality; in its innermost nature it is as much unknown to us as the reality of the external world, and it is as incompletely presented by the data of consciousness as is the external world by the communications of our sense organs" (Freud, p 613). This paper will discuss at length how Freud explains the psychic reality in his analysis of dreams through the elements of regression, wish fulfillment and primary and secondary process.

Psychic Reality

Psychodynamic therapy proposes the fact that the human mind is divided into unconscious and conscious beings. Conscious mind is constituted of our current thought process and the objects of our attention. Unconscious mind is the repository of painful memories, secret cravings and unfulfilled desires that the conscious mind is not aware of. In order to keep these painful thoughts at bay, the mind relies on the defense mechanisms of identification, repression, denial, rationalization, regression, displacement and so on. Our dreams are a manifestation of these traits. While explaining the psychology behind the dream in which the dead child appeared in the dream of his father saying reproachfully " Father, don't you see that I am burning?", Freud stated that it is due to the desire for fulfilling the wish of seeing his dead child alive for once that the father saw the dream. It was the unconscious state of mind that evoked an anxiety in the father to see his child living for once and the forceful desire of his wish fulfillment triumphed over his conscious reflection. It was as if to see his child living for once, the father slept a moment longer. Freud considers analyzing dreams as essential

part of perceiving human psyche. He elaborates on the theme of psychic reality through his explanation of regression, wish-fulfillment and primary and secondary process.

Regression

Sigmund Freud discussed the idea of regression in his interpretation of dreams. The concept of regression was important to describe the psychic apparatus from the perspective of Freudian topographical model which represents an instrument the constituting parts of which are systems with a spatial orientation. In topographical model of regression, excitation moves across the system in a definitive temporal order, travelling from the sensory end to the motor end (eNotes). When dreams are hallucinatory, excitation takes a retrogressive course. Dreams become regressive when the motor system shuts down, the trajectory of dreams then moves in backward direction towards hallucinatory visual representation and perception. This regression is defined as a psychic peculiarity of the dream process.

Freud attaches hallucinatory visions, paranoia and uncanny visions seen by sane persons to the concept of regression, explaining that the suppressed memories lying embedded in our unconscious minds transform into images. He cites the example of one of his hysterical patients, a 12 years old boy who couldn't sleep due to being terrified by a vision of green faces with red eyes. The source of the vision was a boy who this patient was in interaction with four years earlier. That boy had many bad habits and hence the patient's mother In order to dissuade the patient from mixing up with that bad boy mentioned how the complexion of that ill-mannered boy was greenish and eyes red. She further mentioned that such boys were likely to

be demented in later years, would not learn anything at school and doomed for an untimely demise. That prophecy injected a fear into the unconscious mind of the patient who terrified that he would become like that boy started seeing those visions for which he couldn't sleep. Thus Freud shows how thoughts lying dormant in the unconscious mind manifest in regressive dreams. He emphasizes that the importance of suppressed memory in triggering regressive thought-transformation should not be overlooked. He believes that the infantile memories which remain embedded in the unconscious mind many a time appear as hallucinations and fantasies in our dreams. Freud identifies three types of regression: "(a) a topical one, in the sense of the scheme of the γ -systems here expounded; (b) a temporal one, in so far as it is a regression to older psychic formations; and (c) a formal one, when primitive modes of expression and representation take the place of the customary modes" (Freud, p 280). He expounds that all these three types of regressions are basically one and in most of the cases they coincide along with each other.

Wish-Fulfillment

Freud believes that all dreams are a manifestation of the wish-fulfillment. Based on this concept, he divides dreams into two groups - dreams which are apparently wish-fulfilling and dreams in which wish-fulfillment part is the unrecognizable and hidden. In dreams of the second group we find the existence of dream-censorship. Usually it is children who see undisguised wish dreams pure and frank in nature.

In order to explain the source of the suppressed desires, he states that wishes that remain unsatisfied due to external circumstances, wishes

deriving from sexual desires and thirst make way into our dreams at night. He argues that unfulfilled desires during the day may surface in dreams at night in case of children but the same is not applicable for the adults who are not as instinctual about dreams as children are. He ascribes the source of these wish-fulfillment desires in adults to the unconscious mind. He states " that the conscious wish becomes effective in exciting a dream only when it succeeds in arousing a similar unconscious wish which reinforces it" (Freud, 283). When the unconscious wishes ally with the conscious impulse, they materialize in dreams. Unsolved problems, overwhelming desires, harassing cares continue to crowd our minds even when we sleep maintaining a psychic process recognized as preconscious. The thought impulses that continue the activity in sleep are divided into five groups by Freud: 1) unsolved problems, 2) Problems or work which have remained incomplete due to some accidental reason, 3) Thoughts that are rejected and suppressed during the day, 4) thoughts which have been excited in the unconscious during the day due to the activity of the preconscious and 5) Unsettled indifferent impressions of the day (Freud, p 284).

Freud stated that we tend to forget dreams and in our attempt to reproduce the dreams, we distort the dream. He relates our forgetfulness of our dreams to our repression of unpleasant thoughts and experiences as a way of self-preservation because the content of the dreams may be too traumatic for us to come to terms with. He states that the " dream formation is the dormant state of the psyche" which means that the thoughts and desires lying in the unconscious mind reflect in our dreams (Freud, p 265). All our dreams are a product of wish fulfillment. So our inability to recall certain aspects of our dreams reinforces the action of our brain and psychic will power to filter out <https://assignbuster.com/freudian-interpretation-of-dreams-essay-examples/>

the unpleasant emotions and longings that our minds are not emotionally ready to handle. In order to substantiate how dreams are a manifestation of our dormant desires and wish fulfillment, Freud cites his own dream of Irma's injection in which his earlier past medical mistake created an anxiety within him while he was treating Irma who refused to accept his proposed solution. This dream offered him the wish fulfillment of passing the blame for Irma's illness to Otto because the infection Irma was suffering from was not his fault..

Primary and Secondary Process

Freud developed a tired scheme known as the Dream System to identify the occurrence of our dreams, their root and how dreams are a revelation of a psychoanalytic perspective of an individual. Freudian dream system is complex web in which dreams take form within the id. The id is the inherited component, the basic instincts that are present within us at birth. The id consists of intrinsic biological constituents including sex drive or Eros and Thanatos or the destructive death instinct. The id is utterly unconscious and very primitive.

Freud identifies manifest content of a dream as a figurative, censored interpretation of its latent content which is defined as " the underlying meaning of a dream or thought that is exposed in psychoanalysis by interpretation of its symbols or by free association." Manifest content is that content of a dream which the dreamer recalls during psychoanalysis. Latent content involves inappropriate desires while manifest content deals with themes that take root in our conscious thoughts and things that take place in our daily lives. When latent content appears in our dreams, our superego

immediately censors it in order to protect us from a content that could potentially upset us. Freud believes that the latent content is integral to interpret dreams in psychotherapy as the unconscious desires and wishes lie dormant there and only come to the surface through free association. The dream system as explained by Freud begins with a libido which is described as a primary drive of human psyche. It is our id which controls libido or sexual desires. The id tries to fulfill its desires by releasing the tension triggered by the pleasure instinct through primary process which is regarded as the wish-fulfilling mechanism. The libido nurtured by primary process also deals with repression, coitus interruptus and neurotic sexual inhibition. Libido is integral to the function of dream. The next element of dream after libido drives is infantile memories. In dreams, all the childhood memories and inappropriate childhood wishes remain embedded in the deeper coves of the unconscious mind as a way to protect the individual. The dreams are first triggered by the recollection of our childhood memories related to sensory stimulation, life situations and day residue. These trigger points of memories lie dormant in the deeper layers of the unconscious mind.

In the primary stage of dreaming, the dreamer may go through the feeling of life situations as sensory stimulus via day residue. These stimuli are the trigger points of childhood memories. The wish can take place in a disguised form or in real events as the dream goes forward. In Freudian dream system latent content censors all the traumatic events of dreams in order to protect the dreamer from the potential shock. He argues that latent content belies the unfulfilled repressed wish that remains embedded within the dreams of an individual. Latent content performs the function of the ego which is a

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mature extension of id. The ego puts the secondary process involving perception, judgment, recognition and memory into action to mediate between the id and the ego so that all the wishes and longings processed by the id may get filtered by ego and superego. Latent content is crucial to the dream system because it is followed by displacement, condensation and symbolization.

Each element of displacement, condensation and symbolization may appear either together or individually in any dream. Displacement is essential for the interpretation of dreams because it presents a particular time and person in life. The concept of displacement is predicated on the ability to make connection. For example, in a dream displacement takes place when the dreamer associates a violin with his mother because she might have played the violin. Symbolization refers to an embodiment which replaces one item for the other based on certain matching characteristics between both the items. For instance, in the same dream that the individual associates playing of violin with his mother, he may later dream of a powerful woman politician as a symbol of his mother because both the women represent authority and feminine power. Finally, condensation refers to the materialization of a single wish through a number of multiple images stacked together in a dream, somewhat resembling the action of multiple film negatives stacked on top of one another to create a single image when viewed together. All these three elements - displacement, condensation and symbolization work together in tandem to give birth to the next stage of Freudian dream system called secondary elaboration (Fine, 2009). Secondary elaboration in a simplified form means the storyline of a dream as construed by the dreamer.

Secondary process is essential for interpretation of the storyline and context
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of a dream. In this stage, the conscious and unconscious enter negotiation and because of this negotiation, the dreamer is able to remember the dream in a conscious state, thus introducing the dream into the memory panel so that he can remember it once he awakens. This stage is crucial as without secondary elaboration, the individual would not be able to bring the dream into consciousness. The last stage of Freudian dream system is the manifest content closely connected to secondary process. In manifest content, the dreamer recalls his dreams and relates the dreams to actual events in his life. Thus Freudian dream system becomes complete.

Conclusion

Freud lays a great emphasis on the importance of the psychoanalytic value of dreams. He opines that dreams are manifestation of our unconscious desires which in collaboration with the conscious mind reveal our psyche. In describing the psychic reality through the analysis of dreams, Freud touches upon the theories of regression, wish-fulfillment and primary and secondary process. Freud believes all the dreams are a manifestation of our wish-fulfilling desires. The unsolved problems, the unfulfilled cravings and wishes take form in the dreams when the unconscious allies with the conscious. Regression is psychic peculiarity of the dream process. When the motor system of our conscious psyche shuts down, dreams take on a regressive character through hallucinatory visions. In order to fulfill the desires which cannot be fulfilled in real life, the id processes the desire to fulfill the wish in dream through the help of the primary process. But the superego censors the dreams in order to protect the dreamer from shock using the secondary process. Through his psychoanalytical view, Freud brings it to the surface

how psychical reality unfolds itself in a complex web of mental images and visions called ' dreams'.

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