

One need not look far for reasons why Freud might have been criticized. In his September 21, 1897, letter to Fliess, in which he announces his disenchantment with the seduction theory of hysteria that he had been applying in his practice for about a year, Freud describes some of the reasons for his change in attitude: “The continual disappointment in my efforts to bring a single analysis to a real conclusion; the running away of people who for a period of time had been most gripped [by analysis]; the absence of the complete successes on which I had counted....” It is probable that many of the patients who ran from his door came to Freud on referrals from colleagues, and if even only some of them complained to the referring physicians for sending them to such a person, it would be enough for the physicians to stop sending patients to Freud and to advise colleagues to follow suit.

So it is quite likely that Freud’s discussion of the awkwardness of paying medical fees alludes to criticisms by his medical colleagues of Freud’s psychoanalytic practice, which had been informed by his seduction theory. The question to be asked is whether these criticisms were justified in Freud’s mind. The quote above would lead one to conclude that Freud had no recourse but to believe that the criticism of his colleagues was justified, since his seduction theory was wrong. Freud’s December 12, 1897, letter to Fliess, however, indicates that he had not given up on the seduction theory at this time. In that letter, Freud mentions Emma Eckstein, who was treating a woman patient under Freud’s direction. Freud seems to have instructed Emma to be certain not to suggest scenes of seduction to the patient but wait to see what material emerged. What emerged apparently were memories of the same type that had originally convinced Freud of the correctness of the seduction theory. As a result, Freud said in the letter, “My confidence in paternal etiology [the seduction theory] has risen greatly.” So at least at the time of the dream in early March 1898, Freud probably felt that the criticism from his colleagues was unjustified.

Freud made no statements to Fliess or anyone else about whether criticism from his colleagues or the lack of referrals from them played any part in his decision to abandon the seduction theory. It is known, however, that at the time he wrote the September 21 letter, business was virtually nonexistent, leaving Freud copious amounts of time for the dream book and his self-analysis. The method of dream analysis outlined here suggests that Freud’s abandonment of the seduction theory was influenced by what Freud eventually considered to be unfair criticisms from local colleagues and that at the time of the dream Freud had regretted being swayed by these sentiments.

A more clear-cut example of Freud being negatively influenced by criticism concerns events surrounding the cocaine monograph we have not yet considered. Once again, however, we will need to examine realities in Freud’s life that have not been thoroughly documented by historians. The events in question pertain to the reasons why Freud was not thorough enough to hit on the application of cocaine to eye surgery. In explaining why Freud felt he had done so, Jones paraphrases an unpublished April 4, 1885, letter Freud wrote to Martha: “If only, instead of advising Königstein to carry out the experiments on the eye, he had believed more in them himself, and had not shrunk from the trouble of carrying them out, he would not have missed the ‘fundamental fact’ (i.e., of anesthesia) as Königstein did.” Jones then quotes Freud directly: “But I was led astray by so much incredulity on all sides” (Jones 1958, p. 89).

The most important source of whatever skepticism Freud met in suggesting that cocaine might have eye applications would have been Königstein, who was six years older than Freud, a skilled eye surgeon, and a member of the General Hospital’s Ophthalmology Department. It is not known what Königstein thought of the notion, but there is

evidence of a negative attitude. This relates to Königstein's reaction to Freud's request that he experimentally investigate the possibility that the anesthetic action of cocaine may have application to diseases of the eye. Königstein's attitude can be taken from the fact that he botched the experiments in a way that smacks of unconscious sabotage. According to Koller (Byck 1974, p. 293), when Königstein experimented with cocaine at Freud's suggestion, he dissolved the drug in alcohol, whose irritating effect masked the drug's numbing quality. Koller by contrast dissolved the drug in distilled water, which was what Freud used. It is inconceivable that an experienced professional like Königstein could not have guessed that alcohol would have an irritating effect on eye tissues, so there seems to be no logic to his use of alcohol rather than the more usual distilled water, unless Königstein was more interested in proving Freud wrong than he was in admitting to the possibility that he might be right. It is known also that when Königstein heard of Koller's claims, his first reaction was disbelief and that he subsequently became so disturbed by the news of Koller's discovery that he belatedly performed a set of confirming experiments correctly with Freud's help and then attempted to claim that he had discovered cocaine's usefulness independently of any knowledge of Koller's work, in a transparent attempt to snatch some of Koller's glory for himself. It is, therefore, not inconceivable that Königstein was highly critical of the notion that cocaine could have eye applications and that this criticism, which turned out to be unfounded, played a crucial role in Freud missing out on a glorious opportunity.

With regard to the third thematic plane, then, there do seem to be at least two associations to the dried plant specimen that relate to instances of Freud being wrongly criticized by colleagues with respect to get-rich-quick schemes and of Freud becoming discouraged as a result, leading to further negative consequences. This brings us to the subject of the folded colored plate and the associations to it, which do continue the theme of receiving criticism. Freud says, "When I myself had begun to publish papers, I had been obliged to make my own drawings to illustrate them and I remembered that one of them had been so wretched that a friendly colleague had jeered at me over it."

It is unclear from this statement whether the drawings had been completed at the time they were criticized. If they had been, the criticism would seem to have been justified and apparently unrelated to the subject of unfair criticism with regard to unfinished projects that occupies this thematic plane. If the criticism were, however, of an early version of the drawing, then this would be one more instance of unfair criticism with a particular relevance to the issue of whether Fliess should be shown an early draft of the dream book. This theory of dream interpretation would predict that if more information about this incident ever emerged, it would be learned that the latter was the case, that the "colleague" in question was an authority figure, and that either a positive consequence followed from Freud ignoring the criticism or a negative consequence befell Freud upon yielding to the criticism.

The last associations to be covered are found in the following quote: "It had once amused my father to hand over a book with *colored plates* (an account of a journey through Persia) for me and my eldest sister to destroy. Not easy to justify from the educational point of view! I had been five years old at the time and my sister not yet three; and the picture of the two of us blissfully pulling the book to pieces ... was almost the only plastic memory that I retained from that period of my life. Then, when I became a student, I had developed a passion for collecting and owning books, which was analogous to my liking for learning out of monographs: a

favorite hobby I had become a *bookworm*. I had always, from the time I first began to think about myself, referred this first passion of mine back to the childhood memory I have mentioned. Or rather, I had recognized that the childhood scene was a 'screen memory' for my later bibliophile propensities. [Freud's paper on screen memories is referenced.] And I had early discovered, of course, the passions often lead to sorrow. When I was seventeen I had run up a largish account at the bookseller's and had nothing to meet it with; and my father had scarcely taken it as an excuse that my inclinations might have chosen a worse outlet."

To make sure that we have all relevant information for this analysis, we will begin with a consideration of the remark that the memory Freud had of tearing up a book under his father's direction was a screen memory and the fact that Freud directed readers to his paper on screen memories in a footnote. Two questions need to be pursued. One is whether the memory was actually a screen memory, which would indicate that it was a fantasy and not a real memory, and the other is what motivated Freud to include the reference, if it was not a screen memory.

Cole (1998) does not consider the screen memory monograph to contain pertinent information about the dream, and neither does Spence (1981), but Grinstein (1961) and Palombo (1988) do. Cole takes the position that the reference amounts to nothing more than Freud pointing the reader to an explanation of a technical term. It is clear from what he says that he knows of the Freudian rule of thumb that remarks made about a dream are to be taken as associations to it, but is concerned about the 1899 date of the publication. It is difficult to see how a monograph published in 1899 could be an association to a dream dreamt in 1898. Grinstein deals with this matter by saying that although Freud sent the monograph to the publishers in the middle of May 1899, he "certainly had the material in mind before publishing the paper."

A letter Freud wrote to Fliess dated January 3, 1899, would seem to contradict this supposition. The letter begins with the mention of a meteor that was apparently streaming across the sky at that time. Freud then waxes poetical in considering the various things that were illuminated by its brightness: "In the first place, a small bit of my self-analysis has forced its way through and confirmed that fantasies are products of later periods and are projected back from what was then the present into earliest childhood...." A screen memory, in Freud's view, is just such a fantasy parading as a real memory, so Freud would seem to have hit upon the basis for screen memories long after the botanical monograph dream. Furthermore, Freud in his associations indicates that he had a continuous memory of the book-destroying incident, which does not square with the notion of a screen memory, which is something made up after years have elapsed. We are therefore left to ask why Freud called this actual memory a screen memory and attempted to legitimize that claim by citing a reference.

Grinstein's justification for including material from the monograph on screen memories in his discussion of the dream additionally appeals to another Freudian rule of thumb, which he quotes: "Glosses on a dream or apparently innocent comments on it often served to disguise a portion of what has been dreamt in the subtlest fashion, though in fact, betraying it." I shall use the same quote in justifying a contrary position.

The screen memory discussion was added after Freud had associated to the dream. It is an attempt to modify the association, and the attempted modification comes immediately after the statement: "I had always, from the time I first began to think about myself, referred this first passion of mine [regarding collecting books] back to the childhood memory I have mentioned." This is a highly significant admission

having to do with Freud rejecting his father's values. It would seem then that Freud attempted to take the sting out of this memory by leading the reader to believe that the childhood memory wasn't real.

So associated with the colored plate are two memories based on Freud's rejection of his father's value system. One is the painful memory that he at one time complied with this value system in tearing up a book, and the other is the positive memory that he subsequently put that chapter of his life behind him with respect to book collecting and provoked his father's criticism as a result. With respect to the latter case, Freud undoubtedly guessed at his father's negative reaction when he ran up the large bill, yet acted in defiance of it by buying the books he needed anyway.

The criticism Freud received from his father was, to Freud's mind, unfair criticism, but it may be seen to relate to a "project" in only the most general way, with the project in this case being Freud's attempt to make a success of his life through higher education. Note, though, that the memories contain the implication that Freud was not like his father, which could help console him that he need not end up as his father did by pursuing get-rich-quick schemes.

In building an emotional wall between himself and his father, Freud could have been separating himself from Fleiss, too, who also spent much of his time pursuing his favorite hobbies. Fliess had just published a monograph, *The Relationship between the Nose and the Female Sexual Organs*, which received mixed reviews. One reviewer was particularly scathing, characterizing the book as "mystical nonsense" and "disgusting gobbledygook" that "has nothing to do with medicine or natural science" (Breger, 2000, p. 134). Freud of course hoped his book would be met more favorably. Seeing himself as being different from Fliess would thus feed his hope of achieving a better outcome.

There is admittedly no solid basis for this conjecture in Freud's associations, but Freud does go out of his way to mention the dream of Irma's injection. Central to understanding that dream, in my estimation, is an occurrence of disastrous consequences that resulted from Freud yielding to Fliess's opinions in permitting him to operate on Freud's patient, Emma Eckstein. Because of a lack of thoroughness on Fliess's part, Emma nearly died. Seeing Emma regularly could not help but keep the memory of the operation on her nose in Freud's mind, because her face was permanently disfigured as a result (Masson, 1984, p.70).

According to the above analysis, the dream's third thematic plane relates to Freud's decision to temper his desire for Fliess's help out of a concern that Fliess may be unduly critical of his dream book in its current form and that this criticism would have a discouraging effect. Accordingly, given the preponderance of negative associations in this regard, it is not surprising that Freud failed to take Fliess up on his veiled proposal by including the current draft of the book with his March 10th letter. Another thing Freud does is also entirely in line with this analysis: he tests Fliess within the context of his letter by making a series of outlandish theoretical claims, which Fliess could not let go unchallenged if he had any tendency toward being unduly critical:

"Biologically, dream life seems to me to derived entirely from the residues of the prehistoric period of life (between the ages of one and three)—the same period which is the source of the unconscious and alone contains the etiology of all the psychoneuroses, the period normally characterized by an amnesia analogous to hysterical amnesia. This formula suggests itself to me: what is *seen* in the prehistoric period produces dreams; what is *heard* in it produces fantasies; what is *experienced sexually* in it produces the

psychoneuroses. The repetition of what was experienced in that period is in itself the fulfillment of a wish; a recent wish only leads to a dream if it can put itself in connection with material from this prehistoric period, if the recent wish is a derivative of a prehistoric one or can get itself adopted by one. It is still an open question how far I shall be able to adhere to this extreme theory and how far I can expose it to view in the dream book.”

Apparently Fliess passed the test because, as we have seen, on March 15th Freud sent him everything he had.

Conclusion

The theory of normal adult human sleep cycling presented on this website attempts to explain how experiences held in long-term memory continue to influence current behavior. It was assumed that although a concept of reality learned from experience is the basis for current behavior, not all aspects of that reality concept are available for implementation as behavior. Sleep, it was theorized, is concerned with giving temporary prominence to those aspects of a person’s reality concept that are most appropriate to meeting current life demands. Sleep accomplishes such adaptations by means of a process in which many aspects of a person’s life are considered concurrently in a manner that may be thought of as being similar to parallel distributed processing.

Logical implications of this sleep theory with regard to dreaming were explored, and the correctness of these implications was indicated by means of an analysis of Freud’s botanical monograph dream. Here it was shown that the manifest dream is a form of idiosyncratic language designed to permit thought on several simultaneous fronts. Such a language may seem “bizarre” from the point of view of the limited linear form of thought available to waking consciousness, but the detailed examination of Freud’s dream offered here suggests that dreams do not represent a conceptually deficient form of thought.

A minimalist analysis of the botanical monograph dream was offered here, so it should come as no surprise that the psychological import of the dream was not fully indicated. Nevertheless, Freud may be seen as emerging from a difficult period during which virtually every aspect of his pursuit of success was cast into doubt. During the course of his sleep, he successfully fended off these challenges and found grounds for reaching out to Fliess and his wife, to the extent possible, given his generally negative attitudes toward authority figures and women.

Acknowledgments

The author wishes to thank Joseph Weiss, Marshall Bush, and Jessica Broitman for their helpful comments and continuing support.

References

- Bernfield, S. (1953). Freud’s Studies on Cocaine. *J. Am. Psychoanal. Assn.*, 1, 581–613.
- Breger, L. (2000). *Freud: Darkness in the Midst of Vision*. New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
- Byck, R. (Ed.) (1974). *Cocaine Papers by Sigmund Freud*. New York: New American Library.
- Cole, J.R. (1998). “Freud’s dream of the botanical monograph and cocaine the wonder drug.” *Dreaming*, 8, 187–204.

- Fauconnier, G., and Turner, M. (2002). *The Way We Think: Conceptual Blending and the Mind's Hidden Complexities*. New York: Basic Books.
- French, T.M. (1952). *The Integration of Behavior, Vol. 1: Basic Postulates*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Freud, S. (1900). *The Interpretation of Dreams*, J. Strachey (trans. and ed.). New York: Avon, 1965, 202–209 and 316–318.
- Gay, P. (1988). *Freud: A Life for Our Time*. New York: W.W. Norton.
- Grinstein, A. (1961). "Freud's dream of the botanical monograph." *J. Am. Psychoanal. Assn.*, 9, 480–503.
- Jones, E. (1953). *The Life and Work of Sigmund Freud, Vol. 1: The Formative Years and the Great Discoveries, 1856–1900*. New York: Basic Books.
- Masson, J.M. (ed. and trans.). (1985). *The Complete Letters of Sigmund Freud to Wilhelm Fliess 1887–1904*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.
- Masson, J.M. (1984). *The Assault on Truth: Freud's Suppression of the Seduction Theory*. New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux.
- Offenkrantz, W., and Rechtschaffen, A. (1963). Clinical studies of sequential dreams I. A patient in psychotherapy. *Archives of General Psychiatry*, 8, 497–508.
- Palombo, S.R. (1988). "Day residue and screen memory in Freud's dream of the botanical monograph." *J. Am. Psychoanal. Assn.*, 36, 881–904.
- Spence, D. (1981). "Toward a theory of dream interpretation." *Psychoanalysis and Contemporary Thought*, 4, 383–405.
- Sulloway, F.J. (1979). *Freud: Biologist of the Mind*. New York: Basic Books, Inc.
- Weiss, J., et al. (1986). *The Psychoanalytic Process: Theory, Clinical, Observation, & Empirical Research*. New York: Guilford Press.
- Weiss, J. (1993). *How Psychotherapy Works*. New York: Guilford Press.

*Vic Comello was initially trained as a theoretical physicist at the University of Notre Dame and has spent more than thirty years as a psychological researcher. His training led him to approach sleep as a physicist would, by seeking to understand flows and convergences of sleep-related data as they occur naturally during nights of sleep. Memberships include the International Association for the Study of Dreams and the San Francisco Psychotherapy Research Group.

E-mail: vcomello@anl.gov

Published on hdbkpersonality.com March 31, 200; updated June 2004

Reproduced with permission from the author

**Centro de Estudios Oniricos