

(1932). *Psychoanalytic Quarterly*, 1:511-542

### Ego Feeling in Dreams<sup>12</sup>

*Paul Federn*<sup>Ⓢ</sup>

I cannot assume that every reader interested in this study of the dream will care to read or reread my previous communications; therefore, by way of introduction, I should like to review the more important results of my previous studies of ego feeling and outline the conception of the ego which grew out of them.

Ego feeling is the sensation, constantly present, of one's own person—the ego's own perception of itself. This statement reaffirms the idea, emphasized especially by Österreicher, that "the ego" is not a mere abstraction devised to convey in a single word the idea of the "ego participation" (*Ichbezogenheit*) of actions and events. Neither is the ego solely the sum of these ego participations, nor do I regard it merely as the sum of the ego functions (Nunberg), nor yet simply as the "psychic representation" of that which refers to one's own person (Sterba): these are all aspects of the ego—they represent functions performed by the ego or which belong within the ego. The ego, however, is more inclusive; more especially, it includes the subjective psychic experience of these functions with a characteristic sensation. This self experience is a permanent, though never equal, entity, which is not an abstraction but a reality. It is an entity which stands in relation to the continuity of the person in respect to time, space, and causality. It can be recognized objectively and is constantly felt and perceived subjectively. We possess, in other words, an enduring feeling and knowledge that our ego is continuous and persistent despite interruptions by sleep or unconsciousness, because we feel that processes within us, even though they may be interrupted by forgetting or unconsciousness, have a persistent origin within us, and that our body and psyche

---

<sup>1</sup> TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: There is no exact English equivalent for *Entfremdung*. This phenomenon is usually described as "sense of unreality," which does not convey the meaning of *Entfremdung*. The word is therefore translated literally.

<sup>12</sup> Authorized translation of *Das Ichgefühl im Traume*, *Int. Ztschr. f. Ps.* XVIII, 1932, by William J. Spring. Revised by the author.

belong permanently to our ego. Many authors have therefore used the term "ego consciousness" (*Ichbewusstsein*) to designate this phenomenon. The expression "ego feeling" has occasionally been used by Freud and by other psychologists and also, as a self-explanatory term, by laymen. If I prefer this latter expression to the term "ego consciousness" and single out "ego feeling" to mark the integrating part of the ego, I do so not because of an arbitrary preference for this designation but for the following reasons. The ego's experience of itself does not consist simply in the knowledge and consciousness of the qualities of the ego mentioned above; the experience also includes a sensory element for which the words "feeling" or "sensation" are appropriate, and the term "ego consciousness" ignores this feeling quality. Not only in clinical pathology but also in the psychopathology of every-day life—in sleep, fatigue, distraction, and daydreams—we can distinguish, often accurately, between ego *feeling* and ego *consciousness*. Ego consciousness, in the pure state, remains only when there is a deficiency in ego feeling. And the mere empty knowledge of one's self is already a pathological state, known as "estrangement"<sup>1</sup> or depersonalization. The term "ego consciousness," then, would cover our ego experience only if "estrangement" were the normal state of all human beings.

It is also incorrect to identify ego feeling with consciousness, though numerous authors, of whom I believe Janet was the first, have described and defined "becoming conscious" as becoming attached to the ego. At the present time, we know that the property of belonging to the ego may become, be, or remain conscious or unconscious; and from the study of pathological states, we know that ego feeling may disappear from previously conscious portions of the ego and later reappear. In every psychological process, ego feeling may or may not accompany consciousness. When ego feeling does not accompany

consciousness, the individual is only aware that an experience—which may be the perception of a somatic or external reality, a memory, or merely an affect—is or has been taking place within, but this knowledge is accompanied, under these circumstances, by a sense of strangeness; or, in other words, a feeling of estrangement appears instead of ego feeling. That the cardinal feature of "ego experience" (*Icherlebnis*) is not thought or knowledge but sensation was first noted in cases of pathological disturbances in ego feeling. The symptom of estrangement, since it was first discovered, has always been referred to as a *feeling* of estrangement, never as a *knowledge* or *consciousness* of estrangement.

Ego feeling, then, is the totality of feeling which one has of one's own living person. It is the residual experience which persists after the subtraction of all ideational contents—a state which, in practice, occurs only for a very brief time. This total ego feeling is always a combination of changing and unvarying elements, and the total subjective experience of one's ego orientation toward an act is qualified by the ego feeling that is present at the time. I consider it more correct to speak of the "ego orientation *toward* an act" than of the "ego orientation of an act," at least in a discussion of ego feeling.<sup>2</sup> Consideration of the fact that ego feeling constantly fluctuates in extent, so that its content is constantly shifting, and of the fact that it nevertheless is constantly uniting all relations and parts of the ego into a single whole, leads us to the conclusion that the "ego" always includes both total and partial experience and must always be investigated both analytically and synthetically. These conceptions of ego feeling cause us to reject as misleading the temptation to distinguish between viewing a thing exclusively as a whole or exclusively as a part. Psychoanalysis has always sought to comprehend the parts as well as the whole, laying more stress, however, on analysis than on synthesis. My study of ego feeling further emphasizes this double orientation of psychoanalysis.

---

<sup>2</sup> This statement does not imply a dispute with Schilder, who referred to the "ego orientation of an act" for other purposes.

A theorist might still query whether what we have here designated as ego feeling is not merely the intellectual experience of that which remains constant while ever-changing experiences, relations and reactions pass through consciousness; that is, whether it is not merely a *knowledge* on the part of the ego, the content of which escapes attention because it does not change. This question is answered conclusively by the observation that even the clearest *knowledge* of one's own ego is experienced as something insufficient, uncomfortable, incomplete and unsatisfying, even akin to fear; and that even for the purest "self experience" something affective in quality is requisite for normality.<sup>3</sup>

Ego feeling, therefore, is the simplest and yet the most comprehensive psychic state which is produced in the personality by the fact of its own existence, even in the absence of external or internal stimuli. As has been said, it is true that unmixed ego feeling can form the whole content of consciousness for a very short time only, as there are always too many stimuli ready to enter consciousness. To repeat our formulation: combined with the consciousness of the self, there is also an affective sense of the self, which we designate briefly as "ego feeling." In my previous articles,<sup>4</sup> I have studied "ego feeling" more intimately and have shown in pathological and normal cases, that *somatic* and *psychic* ego feeling may be separate from each other, and that we must distinguish within the varying extensions of ego feeling, a nucleus of ego feeling which remains constant; and, in particular, that we have a precise sense of the degree to which our psychic processes and our body are invested with ego feeling. Whenever there is a change

---

<sup>3</sup> To designate the feelings themselves as perceptions of autonomic processes, and to consider such perceptions as equivalent to those with intellectual content (Behaviorism), does not touch the problem. For we are basing our investigation on the empirical fact that there is a difference between intellectual and affective experiences.

<sup>4</sup> Federn, Paul: *ber Variationen des "Ichgeföhls."* Int. Ztschr. f. Psa. XII, 1926. (Trans. in Int. J. Ps-A. VII.) *Narzissmus im Ichgefüge.* Int. Ztschr f. Psa. XII, 1927. (Trans. in Int. J. Ps-A. IX.) *Das Ich als Subjekt und als Objekt des Narzissmus.* Int. Ztschr. f. Psa. XV, 1929.

in ego feeling cathexis, we sense the "boundaries" of our ego. Whenever an impression impinges, be it somatic or psychic, it strikes a boundary of the ego normally invested with ego feeling. *If no ego feeling sets in at this boundary, we sense the impression in question as alien.* So long as no impression impinges upon the boundaries of ego feeling, we remain unaware of the confines of the ego. Psychic and bodily ego feeling can both be active or passive. In different persons the quality of the ego feeling depends also upon what special instinctual forces (e. g., tender, sadistic, masochistic, exhibitionistic) exercise a continuous dominance over the personality or else are ready at all times to find expression. Further, we have confirmed Nunberg's finding that all neuroses and psychoses begin with a condition of estrangement of shorter or longer duration. We also found that the withdrawal of ego feeling from an ego boundary can be a defensive measure of the ego, which can occur with or without repression, or which can initiate repression and itself disappear. The development of the individual is accompanied by a development, qualitative and quantitative, of ego feeling, the stages of libido development also being characterized by various types of ego feeling. Therefore, ego feeling is capable of fixation at or regression to an earlier stage, in respect to both quality and extent.

The hypothesis based on these points, which is useful as a psychoanalytic conception of ego feeling, states that ego feeling is the original narcissistic investment of the ego. As such it has at first no object; I designated it intermediate (*medialer*) narcissism. Not until much later, after the object libidinal cathexes have reached the ego boundary, or have invested it and again been withdrawn, does reflexive narcissism arise.

This hypothesis is supported by numerous clinical observations. If it is correct, the study of "ego feeling" has furnished us with a working method of adding to our knowledge of cathexes with narcissistic libido, and indirectly, of the functioning of object cathexes, also.

Dreams, considered as topics for study, are met with so regularly

in healthy individuals that it is difficult to say whether they should be included in normal or in abnormal psychology. In any case, as regards the ego in dreams we are dealing with a disturbed condition; hence, the study of "ego feeling" in dreams must logically follow a clinical investigation of estrangement. Therefore, using in the main data derived from patients suffering from estrangement, I shall first discuss the relations between estrangement, dreams, and sleep, and only then present our subject proper, the quality and the quantity of ego feeling during dreams.

## **2. Estrangement and Dreaming.**

Very many persons who are suffering from estrangement state that they see reality as in a dream, or, that they feel as if they were in a dream. This is a surprising statement which requires explanation. This statement would not have been surprising, if our feeling in regard to a dream, while we are dreaming, were similar to the one which the estranged individual has in regard to reality. This is not the case, however. The dreamer subjectively feels that his dream is real. The surprising, incomprehensible, even absurd, character of much that is dreamed does not prevent the dreamer from believing in the reality of his dream as long as he is dreaming, even though what he dreams may be inconsistent with whatever knowledge of reality remains over from the waking state in the mind of the dreamer.

In contrast, the estranged individual must actually coerce himself to believe that his impressions are real. Intelligence, common sense, memories, and inferences from memories compel him to admit intellectually something which he does not feel to be evident. To the dreamer, on the contrary, the reality of what he dreams is self-evident—aside from well-known exceptions—even though the dream may contradict all his rational experience.

However, except in cases of extreme depersonalization, we can readily understand what estranged individuals mean when

they say that they see the world as if they were dreaming, if we remember that they make this statement only in retrospect. For, everyone who remembers a dream after he awakens feels in it a certain alien quality. This quality is due to the incoherence and impermanence of the dream, the illogical nature of its content, and the manner in which it vanishes. In retrospect, dream figures are usually shadowy, unsubstantial, or unreal. The process of secondary elaboration not only improves the internal logic of the dream; usually, the same process alters the dream, also, so that it comes to resemble more closely a sequence of waking events. Dreams without secondary elaboration have, when recalled, more of the quality of strangeness. It may well be that this very quality leads to secondary elaboration. We arrive, then, at the curious conclusion that while they are in operation, the processes of dreaming and estrangement are basically different, and that they appear to resemble each other only in the impression which they leave behind. If we disregard the dream's importance as a portal to the unconscious and as an object of study, and if we except dreams of unusual personal significance, a dream is a "nothing"—a series of unreal images, which have disappeared from consciousness and which, even as memories, have automatically lost their content and vividness. But the estranged individual, also, feels an indifference in regard to his experiences during his estranged state. He can only recall that he was in an abnormal state. Persons severely affected by estrangement even say that their reality is less vivid than their dreams, and this is true—for estranged and normal persons do not dream differently.

Another analogy obtains between dreams and estrangement. A dreamer, one might say, is passively overcome by the dream, and the dream develops or unfolds itself *upon* or *with* the dreamer passive. A dreamer also feels that he is passively seized by the dream, for, as a rule, he cannot fix the elements of the dream in order to form deliberate judgments in regard to them. Only rarely can he voluntarily react to any of the

dream elements or bring them back to mind, for the dream enters consciousness more or less as a finished picture, and it arouses only such small parts of consciousness as are necessary to receive the dream picture. These awakened parts, as soon as they are not needed, instantly fall back into sleep. The will is conspicuously absent from dreams. Scherner, in many passages of his book, depicts this lack of centrality of the ego and the weakness of the will in very plastic language. The estranged individual also feels more passive than a normal individual toward what he experiences. However, his reasons for this feeling are different from those of the dreamer: his attention is always diverted to his own condition; he becomes inattentive and his interest in other things is disturbed; so that, as a result of his disorder, he becomes apathetic and passive toward the whole of reality.

Up to the present point, we have been discussing well-known characteristics of the states under comparison. On turning our attention to "ego feeling" (which, it is true, patients do not mention of their own accord) we at once discover a feature common to both states, the dream and estrangement. In both, "ego feeling" is deficient. This is particularly true of those patients with severe depersonalization, whose ego is not invested with full ego feeling either at its boundaries or in its nucleus. These individuals feel their ego only partially and with decreased intensity and suffer a subjective loss in their sense of importance, their feeling of well-being, and the unity of their personality. However, as we shall see, disturbances of the ego in the dream and in estrangement are, for the most part, not alike. We have already drawn attention to the fact that dreams are experienced as real, and the objects of the individual's estrangement as unreal. We conclude that in the case of dreams the ego boundary at which dream experiences impinge, is invested with ego feeling, and that this is not the case for experiences during estrangement. However, neither the waking judgment of the depersonalized individual, nor the partially awakened judgment of the dreamer is able to recognize

as *false* the "unreality" of experience (in estrangement), or the "reality" of experience (in dreams). Neither individual can prevail against the abnormal cathexis of the ego boundary, which in the case of estrangement is too small and in dreams is relatively too great. This impotence in the face of a disturbance of ego cathexis is characteristic of both states.

We have, consequently, discovered two reasons why estranged individuals use the words "as in a dream" to describe their state. The more important reason is the one mentioned last—the recollection that there was a deficiency of ego feeling. This disorder of the ego is not a disturbance of consciousness, nor a feeling of giddiness, unclarity, obscurity or haziness, but an impairment of ego feeling. Before we look for its significance let us discuss a few relations between estrangement and sleep.

### **3. Estrangement, Falling Asleep, and Awakening.**

We know from clinical observation that states of estrangement vary in their intensity and extent at different times in the same patient. Only rarely do patients complain constantly of the same degree of estrangement. Usually, the fact that they are speaking with the physician is enough to bring about an improvement in their condition. Their own interest, and their satisfaction in arousing the attention of the physician and feeling his interest, bring about an increase in the cathexis of the ego boundaries, which in milder cases appears to abolish the sense of estrangement. Usually such patients, after learning to dignify their feeling of estrangement as a symptom, can describe the curve of intensity of their feelings of estrangement since the last visit. Less severely affected new patients, in the excitement of the first visit, do not feel any sense of estrangement, nor do they mention it spontaneously or at all unless direct questioning draws their attention to the fact that these states, also, are the concern of the physician. Then, as experience constantly bears out, the patients reward the physician who wishes to know about these subtle variations in their permanent condition, and who spontaneously suspects the presence

of such states of estrangement, by immediately giving him their complete confidence. Even if for no other reason, an acquaintance with these states is of practical importance for physicians in general as well as for psychoanalysts.

However, although such mildly affected patients report about their states of estrangement only in the past tense, estrangement does occur even under the protected conditions of a consultation hour. Curiously enough, many such patients have merely forgotten that previously, in health, they had a stronger contact with the world and with themselves, a contact which gave a full sense of well-being but which no longer spontaneously comes to mind even as a basis of comparison.

The intensity of the estrangement depends on many factors which do not always have the same effect, but differ in their effect according to the degree of severity, or stage of development of the case. There are patients who develop feelings of estrangement as soon as they are left alone or feel themselves abandoned, whereas the presence of a person invested with libido abolishes the disturbance, or at least diminishes it to such a point that they practically feel no estrangement. Observations of this order long gave rise to the belief that estrangement consisted in a withdrawal of object libido. In some cases the estrangement sets in just when the patient meets persons who are invested with object libido; and conversely, in other cases just when there is *no one* in his environment in whom he can take an actual interest. Often merely to direct his object libido toward another person temporarily suffices to protect him from estrangement; but soon his capacity to invest his ego boundary with ego feeling is exhausted, and he is suddenly seized with a sense of the strangeness and unreality of external and internal perceptions. In most cases the severity of the estrangement also depends, fundamentally, on somatic factors. Fatigue and exhaustion or intense exertion predispose to estrangement—then, his ego frontiers crumbling under such bodily or psychic strain, the patient, gradually or suddenly, intermittently or abruptly finds himself in a

condition of estrangement. Hartmann and Nunberg were the first to show that sudden emotionally charged experiences which were followed, for only partly conscious reasons or more usually for unconscious reasons, by a so-called object loss, may produce traumatic estrangement. Theoretically, the effect of all these factors can be explained, economically, by making a distinction between two questions relating to libidinal cathexis; namely, first, whether ego feeling can be sufficiently established at all for the ego boundary in question, and secondly, whether the libido reserve is great enough to maintain the cathexis of the ego boundary. The severity of estrangement is therefore dependent not only, dynamically, on the inhibition of cathexis at the time, but also, economically, on the magnitude of the libido supply. We can formulate this distinction, which applies in general in pathological states, by contrasting a withdrawal of libido due to an external or internal frustration with what we might call an exhaustion (*Versiegen*) of libido.

Observation teaches us that in chronic cases of estrangement, improvement, other things being equal, consists in a reestablishment of ego feeling, but that in each situation a sufficient cathexis of the ego boundary can be set up only slowly and after repeated efforts. For this reason, often, very subtle differences in ego disturbance are described in terms of whether or not the environment is sharply observing the patient or is friendly toward him. It is especially during improvement that patients describe such differences.

Analogously, we know from clinical experience that estranged persons whose condition has already improved do not always, like normal persons, regain their normal orientation toward the inner and the outer world; indeed, they feel more estranged after sleeping than at other times. Even in patients not improving, this symptom is more severe in the morning than later in the day, resembling in this respect the symptoms of depressive patients in so far as there are no exacerbations caused by the above mentioned factors of fatigue and strain. Thus, we see that melancholia and estrangement

are characterized by similar daily curves of severity, and similar reaction curves to strain and exhaustion. This morning increase of symptoms is directly connected with the state of ego feeling during sleep. This morning exacerbation would not have been expected on the basis of previous experience with normal individuals. On the contrary, according to our experience with healthy persons, we might have anticipated that after the libido reserve was completely replenished by sleep, the ego, in its nucleus and at its boundaries, would, at least for a time, be fully invested with ego feeling. Then, according to the severity of the case and the demands made upon the individual, the ego disturbance would reappear in the course of the day. According to this, the disturbance of libido economy would appear at awakening only potentially, and would only become actual sooner or later in the course of the day in response to the demands of the individual. In fact, such a curve is really present in all estranged persons in whom the disturbance shows any fluctuation. However, it does not become effective immediately in the morning, because the abnormally long transition from sleeping to waking postpones the mechanism of simple dependence on the magnitude of the libido reserve. In the estranged individual, as we have said above, there is a disturbance in the displaceability or, better, in the displacement of the libido, in so far as it has to invest the ego boundaries.

The investment of object representations with object libido may at the same time hardly be disturbed. The fact explains why, in spite of their estrangement, patients can work with interest and accuracy, and why they do not cease to show selection in their object relations, at least within certain limits, in so far as there is no concomitant difficulty in maintaining object cathexis. The latter difficulty may be secondary or, as Nunberg has shown, may have been the precipitating cause of the estrangement. But even in the latter case the object cathexis may persist. The very fact that it persists in the presence of a defective ego boundary causes this particular object

---

<sup>5</sup> Concerning the reasons for the exhaustion (*Versiegen*) of libido in melancholia, see Federn: *Die Wirklichkeit des Todestriebes*. Psychoanalytischer Almanach, 1931. (Trans. *The Reality of the Death Instinct, Especially in Melancholia*. *Psa. Rev.* XIX, 1932.)

to arouse a special feeling of strangeness. What was called "object loss" consists in this loss of capacity to perceive an object with one's full ego feeling: with the loss of the ego feeling the narcissistic satisfaction in having the object is lost, too. Of this I have been fully convinced by a case of pathological mourning. After the death of the patient's mother all relationships, things, and recollections in any way connected with her mother were particularly strongly invested with object libido. Repeatedly, new and often very minor events from the past were coming into the patient's mind; everything connected with her mother took on great significance. The patient did not sleep day or night, because of the press of ideas and associations belonging to her mother complex. These object representations were disturbingly vivid in content and deeply depressive in affect. At the same time, there was present a complete estrangement from this intensive repetition of all her past object relationships with her mother, which extended both to their ideational content and to the affect of grief itself. She said, "I have the grief but I do not feel it." Although her grief was manifest in her facial expression and in its somatic effects, the patient continually complained that she did not "really" feel her grief, an assertion which, for an inexperienced observer such as I was at the time, was absolutely inconsistent with her whole condition and appearance. Years later a similar case permitted me to understand the situation: the object cathexes evoked the pain of bereavement, but the ego boundary in question<sup>5</sup> was without feeling, as though dead. We must therefore designate "pathological mourning" (Freud) as a narcissistic psychosis, not only because of its genesis and in its character as an unconscious identification, but also for its libidinal mechanism, a statement that holds equally true for melancholia. In recalling all the cases of pathological mourning and of melancholia in

my analytic experience, I do not remember one patient who failed to express the paradoxical complaint that he felt nothing but suffering, and yet did not really feel the suffering.

Though this field is somewhat remote from the present topic, I have treated it in detail here, because, for the reader to be convinced of what follows, it is important for him to recognize that there is a real distinction between *object* cathexis and the *narcissistic* cathexis of the corresponding ego boundary. The difference between the normal and the abnormal mechanism of narcissistic cathexis of the ego boundaries is seen most clearly in the morning in the speed of recovery of the ego after sleep. It is because of this delayed mechanism that both estranged and depressed individuals feel an exacerbation of their symptoms every morning. And the increased difficulty of cathexis of the ego boundary is surely one reason why the restoration and strengthening of the ego during sleep fails to cause an improvement in ego feeling immediately on awakening. In melancholia there must be additional unfavorable influences, for relative improvement does not set in until evening. The investigation of these factors in melancholia is not in the scope of the present discussion. Provisionally, the morning exacerbation in estrangement seems to me adequately explained by the physiological processes in sleep. However, I have not as yet paid special attention to the problem whether, in the narcissistic psychoses, sleep itself is not subject to special disturbance.

One statement can be made which is unquestionably true: in dreamless sleep ego feeling is extinguished. I have dealt with this point in detail in my first article, *ber Variationen des Ichgefühls*. I first recognized the existence of ego feeling during the act of going to sleep—that is, not in *statu nascendi* but in *statu exeundi*. When an individual falls asleep rapidly, ego feeling is suddenly extinguished. A sudden disappearance of ego feeling of this nature is also found in narcolepsy. When the process of falling asleep is disturbed, the loss of ego feeling is only partial and gradual. Falling asleep is promoted if one learns to withdraw ego feeling as much as possible from the

body, leaving only the ego feeling connected with breathing. Such an intentional withdrawal of ego feeling is well-known to the Yogis. But it should be used only in harmony with the regular periodicity of sleeping and waking, which in itself predisposes to the disappearance of ego cathexis. If one coerces oneself to sleep in opposition to this periodicity, sleep itself becomes an effort, and one is more likely to awake fatigued and unrefreshed.

As long as a sleeper does not dream, he does not feel his ego. Whether an unconscious ego persists, or whether Friedrich Kraus's "basic personality" (*Tiefenperson*) corresponds to an ego or to the id, are still insoluble questions. It must be assumed that even in dreamless sleep, much psychic and even intellectual work, shrewd and intelligent arrangement and construction, takes place in the unconscious. Freud has compared the unconscious with the "good folk" in fairy tales who help us with our work during our sleep. But as far as we know, all the unconscious accomplishments during sleep are biologically centered through the unity of the body, and not psychologically through the unity of the ego. Hence Freud's statement that sleep is a narcissistic state refers to unconscious narcissistic cathexes which, if they are attached to any entity at all, at least are not attached to the ego of waking life. It is probable that Freud wished this statement merely to express in an extreme fashion the fact that with the exclusion of sensory stimuli, object cathexes are withdrawn to an incomparably greater degree than during waking life. The withdrawal of object cathexes permits narcissistic cathexes to become object cathexes, as when the person of the dreamer is wholly projected and appears in the dream as another person. Here, in our discussion of the manifest expression of narcissism in ego feeling, we must establish that in dreamless sleep this narcissistic cathexis of the ego is absent.

When, on falling asleep, consciousness is lost, ego libido ceases to be in the ego and all ego feeling disappears. It is mostly a matter of taste whether one says: that the ego libido

---

<sup>6</sup> Federn, Paul: *Das Ich als Subjekt und als Objekt im Narzissmus*. Int. Ztschr. f. Psa. XV, 1929.

vanishes (*versiegt*), that it is asleep, that it is withdrawn into the id, or that it is distributed among the partial functions. However, this narcissistic cathexis always stands ready to return to the ego, as we see from the fact that except in pathological conditions, every stimulus which wakes the individual immediately reestablishes ego feeling. This is readily understood if it is recalled that ego feeling perpetuates the most primordial sensation of living substance, phylogenetically and ontogenetically,<sup>6</sup> and that its disappearance is probably a direct expression of the sleep of the cells. These are facts gleaned from biology. Mysticism, on the other hand, would say that the mind leaves the body during sleep and returns to it on waking. The mind carries away all its knowledge with it, and during dreams is supposed to reside not in the body, but in the place where the dream takes it. This theory is an expression of the fact that the ego feeling in dreams is, for the most part, a purely psychic one.

On awakening from sleep, ego feeling is established immediately. On waking from a dream it is exceptional for the ego feeling to be continuous with that in the dream. In health the ego feeling on waking is vivid and undiminished and fills body and mind with satisfaction and vigor. The ego also immediately regains its security as to its temporal continuity with its own past and its own future. This is not the case in many neurotics. They feel their inadequacy in the morning. This is true in most cases of phobia and of "pre-melancholia" (with this term I refer to the daily depressive moods which may exist for years before the onset of melancholia) and, as mentioned above, in cases of estrangement. Were one to inquire among all those who complain of beginning the day badly, for symptoms of estrangement, it is possible that one might even find that they were constantly present. It is true that the patient does not mention them himself, because his bed and his bedroom are his fortress, remote from the demands of the

day and of object relations. The estrangement first becomes fully perceptible when the individual turns toward an object. The disorder causes the full ego feeling to become established only gradually. It would be interesting to investigate to what extent disturbances and delays in the everyday habits of dressing, etc., are connected with a morning ego deficiency.

As an example of how severely a marked case of estrangement can be disturbed in the morning I will cite a case which was materially improved by prolonged analysis. The patient's sister was in an advanced state of severe catatonia. The patient, also, had symptoms which went beyond mere estrangement, and every six months there were transitory exacerbations lasting only a few days, with uncertainty of orientation, hypochondriacal sensations, and severe anxiety, which corresponded to an abrupt but mild catatonic disturbance. This very intelligent patient understands the nuances of ego cathexis and the problem of estrangement so well, from his own experience, that he can give the most precise information concerning his condition. He can accurately distinguish estrangement for sense perceptions, for affect and for thinking; he states that today he no longer has these disturbances, well-known to himself and to me, but that the total intensity of his ego continues to be diminished, and particularly after awakening. It takes a long time before his full ego feeling is established. He feels that this is related to his sexual potency. Sometimes he is better, and then he has the same sexual excitement and general vigor in the morning which he had in his years of health. Usually, however, this normal libidinous feeling is replaced by a mixture of mild anxiety and trembling lust, which he senses throughout his body, and which does not permit a normal bodily ego feeling to appear. This represents a regression of ego feeling to an earlier, masochistic stage. This peculiar feeling quiets down only gradually, to be superseded by a state of moderately diminished ego feeling which, for him, is usual. All patients with severe estrangement give remarkable accounts of how they regain their ego in the morning. They are and

feel strange, until they "become themselves," as far as the disturbance in the economy and mobility of their ego libido permits. I should like to add that a morning disturbance of ego feeling of this type usually causes the function of the will to be reestablished more slowly in the morning.

Up to the present we have in part discussed, and in part only indicated, the relations which exist—subjectively and objectively—between estrangement, dream, and sleep. But I had other reasons for turning to this problem, and introduced the discussion of these relations chiefly for didactic purposes. I wished to use them to renew the reader's interest in the difference between narcissistic and object cathexis, in the phenomenon of ego feeling, and in the inconstancy of the ego boundary, so that he might be more interested in the subject of this paper proper, ego feeling in dreams. This subject became important to me, because from the ego feeling in dreams it is possible to demonstrate the distinction between psychic and bodily ego feeling, utilizing a special method of self-observation.

#### **4. Ego Feeling in Dreams.**

Dreams which one hears, reads, or recalls have undergone secondary elaboration, not only as regards their content but also as regards the manner in which things happen in them. It is almost impossible to remember them exactly. Involuntarily one tends to recall the events of the dream as if one had followed them as an awake, unified and complete personality, and experienced them with one's whole being. The more we have ourselves done and seen in the dream, the more strongly do we hold this belief.

Once we have begun to pay attention to ego feeling, and ask ourselves or another dreamer on awaking what the ego feeling in the dream was, we will discover, first of all, that a consciousness of the self was always present, and that it was the right one. The dreamer is always identical with the waking person, and knows this with certainty. This feature enables

the dreamer to free himself of some troublesome portions of the ego by projecting them into other persons. The dream ego itself, however, always remains one's own ego, with a consciousness of the continuity of one's own psychic processes.

However, in the majority of dreams, and in the greater part of each dream, this dream ego differs from that of waking life in that there is a sense of one's identity (*Eigengefühl*) only as regards one's psychic processes while the body is, so to say, ignored. In waking life, psychic and bodily ego feeling are not easy to distinguish, because both are so obviously permanently inherent in the ego. As regards dreams, however, it is quite clear to retrospective memory that these two forms of ego feeling are entirely distinguishable.

In spite of the fact that everything dreamed is experienced as wholly real, we do not—in the great majority of all dreams—feel that we are corporeally present. We do not feel our body with its weight and its form. We have no bodily ego feeling with its ego boundaries, as in normal waking life. However, we are not at all aware of this deficiency of the body-ego, while we would feel it dreadfully during waking life. I have already mentioned that even an estranged person need know nothing of his estrangement if he has no immediate task to perform, or, for instance, if he is in the protection of his bed. But dreaming is only a very partial awakening from the state of "egolessness." The unconscious and preconscious processes, which become the manifest dream content, awaken the ego where they strike its boundaries, so that there is an ensuing new investment with ego feeling, and as long as a dream picture may have need for it, an ego boundary is never without cathexis. The evanescence of the dream and the impossibility of bringing it back to mind and considering it, are due to the fact that the narcissistic investment of the psychic ego boundaries is constantly being withdrawn as soon as one dream picture is finished and another appears.

There are exceptions to this. A scene may persist for a time; the dreamer may even recall a previous scene. Under what

circumstances these two exceptions occur is a special problem. If the whole dream takes its course very slowly and in apparently reënforced pictures, the sleep is a pathological state, a state of severe over-fatigue, analogous to that of a fatigued retina, in which the ability to receive new images is established more slowly and the previous image remains longer than normally. The consciousness of the normal dreamer regains its receptivity to new images as quickly as does the healthy retina.

The dream state ordinarily contents itself with the psychic ego and its variable boundaries: a bodily ego feeling appears only under certain conditions. When the dream picture impinges on the psychic ego boundary it awakens consciousness. Because it strikes the *psychic* ego boundary from without, as an object cathexis, it is felt as real, even though it may contradict reality. In the dream we are certain of the reality of what happens; we sense it psychically. Exceptionally we see it with lifelike or even greater vividness. We see it as real; therefore the visual ego boundary must be to some extent awakened; but we do not have a sense of our presence as a body among bodies. It is this body-less condition of the dreamer to which I wish to draw special attention in this article.

After awakening, usually one cannot remember where and how one felt one's body to be; even in the most interesting dream scene one cannot remember whether one was sitting or standing, the direction of one's gaze, or even the posture one assumed—this even though the dream scene may be so well ordered that one can draw it. In some dreams, the remembered events, such, for example, as seeking an object in a store, meeting a number of people or the pursuit of an individual, directly require that the dreamer himself must have been in a certain place at a certain time, but nevertheless was there only as an observing psychic ego, or even a moving observing psychic ego, without any bodily ego feeling and without consciousness of one's body. The latter has not been awakened from the sleeping state of being without cathexis. The dream has shown no interest in the body of the dreamer. The

dream awakens the sleeper no more than is necessary, and in this shows a precise selection, which may be attributed to the dream function or perhaps to the dream work. In any case there must have been a disaggregation of ego functions in sleep which permits such a partial awakening of the ego. Thus, the dream work has a selective and condensing action both on the dream material and on the ego boundaries.

In sleep we not only recuperate from the stimuli of daily life and reactions of the ego to these daily irritants, but we also permit the ego as a whole to rest. And if sleep is disturbed by undischarged reactions, wishes or stimuli, the dream affords it additional protection by permitting only a partial awakening of the functions of consciousness and of the ego cathexis. The nucleus of ego feeling, which is connected with the function of the labyrinths and with orientation in space, need be awakened only enough to permit of the dream scenes appearing correctly oriented in space (as regards up and down). It is probable that without this nucleus there can be *no ego feeling at all*, for the intact ego apparently never feels disoriented in space. However, in order to use as little as possible of the ego feeling of the ego nucleus, bodily ego feeling awakes as little and as seldom as possible. Even as regards the ego nucleus, noteworthy exceptions do occur in dreams, e. g., a sudden turning upside down of the whole dream environment, exceptions which, as we know, are used to represent certain typical experiences.

This economizing of ego cathexis in dreams is so strict that there are even dreams of movement, in which bodily ego feeling is lacking. We would all assume that a dream experience of such definite bodily character as that of flying and floating could not occur without a strong and complete bodily ego feeling. But even this is not true. I wish to demonstrate the differences, by means of this well-known and well-understood typical dream,<sup>7</sup> between cathexis with bodily and with psychic ego feeling.

It often happens that in flying the dreamer has a sense of

---

<sup>7</sup> Federn, Paul: *ber zwei typische Traumsensationen*. Jahrb. d. Psa. VI, 1914.

his whole body, particularly when an exhibitionistic wish, a desire to show himself, is present. But even in exhibitionistic flying dreams, as in other exhibitionistic dreams, the body-ego is only seldom complete. Ego feeling may be distinct only for the upper part of the body, or for the arms, or for the lower half of the body, the remainder of the body being entirely without cathexis or only vague in consciousness and feeling. But particularly in these dreams, it happens at times that there is a painful sense that ego feeling is deficient, as for example in dreams of floating on staircases, in which the lack of feeling in the chest and in the arms can be quite unpleasant. However if, as often happens, the flying is done in a flying machine, bodily ego feeling is as a rule wholly lacking. The dreamer remembers the direction and course of the flight and, also, the machine, but he obtained no exact impression of the machine during the flight; he was not conscious of his body or of its position in the machine. It is still more surprising that bodily ego feeling may be quite deficient not only in these strongly displaced and symbolic representations of the sexual act, but even in direct sexual dreams. Often the feeling is limited to the sexual organs; and often there is present only the specific pleasure sensation, entirely without bodily ego feeling.

Psychic ego feeling in dreams, which, as we said, is the form of cathexis regularly present, is incomparably more often passive rather than active in character. When psychic ego feeling is active, however, bodily ego feeling is usually present also. A particular type of dream associated with active psychic ego feeling is the peeping dream, which includes the bodily ego feeling of the eyes but no feeling of the remainder of the body.

In a few dreams bodily ego feeling is present either during the whole dream or only in single parts of it. The difference between those parts in which bodily ego feeling is present and those in which it is absent is quite definite. Whoever has once become aware of it can usually tell quite definitely in which scenes of the dream he experienced bodily ego feeling. Bodily ego feeling may be very vivid and accentuated, it may

be of ordinary quality, or, on the other hand, it may be expressly felt as vague and indistinct. The most extreme case of a particularly vivid bodily ego feeling with a specific quality was reported by a patient, who, in childhood, had had typical somnambulistic dreams of a constant nature.

He relates that he would arise from his sleep with great effort in order to save someone or something. He would have to forestall a danger. The danger would consist in something falling down and striking the endangered person or object. The sleeper would get up with the sense that it was his duty to help and to forestall the danger. This was a dream action commanded by his super-ego. The act of getting up was difficult. The dreamer had a sense of anxiety or oppression connected with the fact that he must get up. He would feel this oppression as in a nightmare; but, while in a typical nightmare the feeling of weight would be projected from the chest on to the incubus which weighed upon it, in our somnambulist it could be felt in the body itself as a difficulty in lifting the body—he sensed the weight of his body which had to be lifted; that is, as a burden and an impediment to getting up and subsequently to walking, it would remain within the dreamer's ego. During the act of walking, the bodily ego feeling was exceptionally intense.

Contrasting in one aspect to this type of somnambulistic dream—I do not know to what extent it is typical—are the inhibition dreams. In an inhibition dream a movement is intended but is held up at the last moment. Then, in the last moment before waking, a strong bodily ego feeling appears in the inhibited limb or limbs. But this somatic ego feeling in the inhibited limb differs from normal bodily ego feeling not only in intensity but also in the fact that the organ thus invested with ego feeling is felt as *outside* the ego.<sup>8</sup> Just as during waking an intense bodily pain is *felt*, by the normal

---

<sup>8</sup> I know that this description sounds paradoxical, but the paradox is connected with the sensation, not with the description. The organ lies partially within the sensory ego boundary, but outside that for motor activity.

individual (not by the hypochondriac), as if it hit the ego from without, although one knows that the painful organ belongs to the body—so the painful immovability and rigidity of the inhibited limb during the dream is felt as striking the ego from without. Only after awaking does the ego regain the feeling of command over and possession of the organ.

In somnambulistic dreams, on the contrary, the feeling of bodily weight remains within the ego. Common to both types of dream is the fact that a contrast between super-ego and ego comes to expression in them. In the inhibition dream the ego wishes to do something; the wish, arising from the id, is concurred in by the will of the ego, and the bodily movement would begin if the ego were not forced, by command of the awakening super-ego, to inhibit the execution of the wish and its own desire. In the end, the opposing wish prevents the execution of the previous act of will. In contrast, in the somnambulistic dream the will of the ego is incited by the super-ego to a positive action which is burdensome to the ego. To summarize, in the inhibition dream the ego says "I am not allowed to do it"; while in the somnambulistic dream the ego says "I am required to do it".

My somnambulist patient, throughout the whole process of sleep-walking, was able clearly to observe and, later, to recall another curious double orientation of the ego. During the whole process there was present an opposing command, which resisted getting up and which retarded and impeded movement. However, this opposing will does not, as in the inhibition dream, arise from the super-ego, but from a part of the ego. The sense of being oppressed by the task, mentioned above, was rationalized throughout the dream by the "sensible" thought, "You are asleep and dreaming; wait until tomorrow morning and see if the danger cannot be removed then, or if, perhaps, it does not exist at all." It is as if the ego were divided. One part is very close to the thinking of waking life, while the other part sleeps so profoundly that it can carry out movements without waking. That this sleep must be

very deep to permit such division of the ego follows from the feeling which occurs when the sleep-walking is interrupted by waking up, either as a result of an external stimulus or occasionally as a result of a decision of the somnambulist himself. This feeling is always one of being torn from the deepest sleep. That such an exceptional depth of sleep—that is, "being a good sleeper"—is sufficient in itself to explain the possibility of such complex muscular activity during sleep, is inadequate. We know, besides, that deep sleep can be established just to allow the sleeper to express contradictory wishes and tendencies of will. All sleep-walking consists in going from the bed and returning to the bed. That this dream is a compromise is shown even in these two phases of walking. I shall discuss the somnambulistic dream elsewhere; it was introduced into the present paper only because it is the dream in which I have, so far, found the most marked bodily ego feeling—namely, the feeling of a hindering body-ego, of a resistance arising from the body-ego. The somnambulistic dream also forms an exception to the rule, that when the psychic ego feeling is active the bodily ego feeling is active too; for in this case psychic ego feeling was active while the body-ego was passive, that is, was felt as a hindrance. During the sleep-walking, however, the body-ego became active.

As a rule bodily ego feeling, when it occurs in dreams, is much less marked than in the abnormal dreams of which I have just spoken. When bodily ego feeling does not involve the whole body, but only parts of it, the parts are usually those which stand in relation with the external world of the dream, either through movements or through sensations, as I noted previously in the case of floating dreams. But it must not be thought that in dreamed movements the moving limbs are always invested with bodily ego feeling. I remarked, above, the absence of bodily ego feeling in dreams of flying in machines; the same statement applies to many other movement dreams, which are devoid of any bodily ego feeling, even of the partial type. In the following study of the interpretive

value to be ascribed to the different types of investment with bodily ego feeling, we shall find that the apparently unimportant, never-heeded feature, whether the dreamer does or does not feel the limb while it is being moved, is of crucial importance in the interpretation of the dream; not, indeed, for the uncovering of the latent content but as regards the attitude which the ego takes toward the latent dream thoughts.

### **5. The Significance of Differences in Ego Feeling in Dreams.**

If the reader is convinced of the wide range of variations in ego feeling, and of the preciseness of our information concerning the appearance of bodily ego feeling in dreams, he will, I hope, share my expectation that so precise a symptom cannot be without significance. The meaning of this phenomenon can be understood only in the light of psychoanalytic methods; and psychoanalysis may be able to utilize this understanding in practical work also. Finally, our new knowledge leads us to a general problem of psychology which is so difficult, that every new approach must be welcome—namely, the problem of the will.

When, purely from observation, I learned what great differences there may be in the ego feeling of dreams, I tried to list different explanations which occurred to me and apply them first of all to my own dreams, in which I could state with certainty whether bodily ego feeling was present or not. At first, I thought that I could find a reciprocal relation between the degree to which the ego is emphasized and the intensity of the dream pictures, because this relation held true in a few dreams. However, this assumption proved to be erroneous as did a second assumption, that bodily ego feeling occurs when the dream deals with the total problem of the dreamer's personality, his own fate. These two misleading relations were derived merely from peculiarities of individual dreams.

It then occurred to me that in many dreams a partial ego feeling could be explained simply, and at first without theoretical interest, by the fact that very often, in dreams, an especially

strong affect is accompanied by strong bodily ego feeling. This holds true particularly for anxiety dreams, but it also is true of dreams in which the dreamer feels pity or pride. By analogy, a stronger ego feeling makes its appearance when an instinctual impulse becomes conscious in the dream, as in masochistic or exhibitionistic dreams. A careful study of bodily ego feeling as conditioned by affect and instinct would be very profitable. From knowledge gained in other fields, it is certain that we must distinguish between active and passive ego feeling, and this point proves to be useful in this instance. We have one sort of ego feeling corresponding to the active functions and another sort corresponding to the passive functions of the body. In dreams in which there is a strong affect of shame or fear, in masochistic dreams, and in exhibitionistic dreams, the bodily ego feeling is a passive one.

I suspect that definite affects have a corresponding cathexis of definite parts of the body with passive ego feeling. If such a relation can be demonstrated as a constant finding, we may suppose that, also, in dreams in which there is no affect but in which a part of the body is invested with a particular passive ego feeling, one might be able to deduce the presence of an affect which belongs to the dream, but which was not "awakened". For dreams are poor in affect; it is a necessary condition for sleep that affects be not fully produced.

As regards *active* bodily ego feeling, observation of my own dreams and the dreams of others proved that it appears when the dreamer not only *wishes* what the dream signifies, but also sanctions the dream wish or part of it with his *will*. For this reason, dreams are seldom accompanied, in their entirety, by active bodily ego feeling, for generally we are dealing with forbidden wishes which, disturbing sleep, are fulfilled in the dream. Only rarely does the ego venture to desire the forbidden. But the ego may do so partially, and individual parts of the dream action may correspond to the will of the dreamer, even though during waking life these actions might be opposed by the remaining portions of the ego. A consistent "state of

mind" exists only as a phrase in books on jurisprudence, where it is supposed even to solve the problem of guilt. We psychoanalysts, and today we may well say "we psychologists," know how little undivided conviction and will man possesses, and how often, in the course of the day, the waking man wills to do something and does not do it. What he willed was his real desire. But in spite of his willing and desiring the ego obeyed the super-ego, not only did not fulfill the wish, but also repressed it. In the dream the wish awakens the psychic ego by means of the manifest dream pictures, and then the whole ego can sanction the wish in the dream, because while awake the ego wanted this wish too. Then, not only does the corresponding psychic ego boundary receive a cathexis but the bodily ego is aroused as well. However, such an arousal does not allow sleep to persist for long. For this reason it is possible, in waking from a dream with exceptionally strong and complete active bodily ego feeling, to observe oneself, and to become completely convinced of the fact, that on waking one has a strong sense of still wanting what he wanted at the end of the dream. In this manner, in the past few years, I have been able to establish by self-observation the typical significance of dreams with full bodily ego feeling, just as in previous years I was able to determine the significance of this feeling in the inhibition dream. My interpretation was confirmed when it was tested by the analysis of dreams. A concurrence of the will with the dream wish is an enhanced fulfilment of the pleasure principle, and, as a matter of fact, these intensive "will dreams" are particularly pleasurable. We know, however, that the opposing will of the super-ego easily changes them into inhibition dreams. Actually *the explanation of dreams with bodily ego feeling as "will dreams"* was already tacitly included in the explanation of inhibition dreams. The explanation, that toward the end of the sleep the body-ego might be expected to be awakening, is invalidated by the fact that more frequently it does not do so.

The observation, that a partial bodily ego feeling so often

accompanies dreamed movements, very well fits our explanation that active bodily ego feeling discloses the will of the dreamer. For these correspond to a volitional impulse magnified into an action. It is more curious that such movements should ever occur without bodily ego feeling. Dream analysis shows that such a lack of bodily ego feeling is not accidental. If a movement is made and no bodily ego feeling accompanies it to reveal that the patient willed it, this movement is intended to emphasize his ability, not his desire, to make the motion. The dream wish, then, refers to the ability. For this reason, the typical flight dream of an impotent man is that of flying in a machine. In this type of flying, as we recall, bodily ego feeling is usually absent. In fact, many impotent men do not wish the sexual act or an erection for sexual reasons; instead they wish that they were able to carry out the act, that is to say, that they were potent in general. This is true particularly in the case of neurotics for whom impotence fulfills an unconscious wish which runs counter to masculine sexuality, or of those neurotics in whom impotence is due to the desire not to have intercourse with particular sexual objects. Similarly, on the other hand, we can understand why some flying dreams occur *with* full bodily ego feeling; that is, because they represent fulfilment of actual willing, not merely wishing to be able to do it.

By observing bodily ego feeling, we have been able to determine the way in which "I want to" (*ich will*) and "I can" are expressed in dreams. From this we can see that this method of expression quite corresponds to the meaning of these verbs as auxiliaries of mode in the grammatical sense. For the mode of a verb expresses the attitude which a person's ego takes toward the activity or experience conveyed in the verb. In the case of "I will" the ego affirms the action and causes it to be carried out. "I can" states that, as far as the ego is concerned, the action is possible. It is therefore meaningful and logical that in dreams "I will" is expressed by the presence of active bodily ego feeling, and "I can" by the presence of

psychic ego feeling only, and an absence of ego feeling. These findings should encourage us to look for other expressions of modality in dreams.

The somnambulist, referred to above, presented a special increase in bodily ego feeling, which he perceived not as active ego feeling but, at first, as a burden; and yet at the same time he willed to do the difficult thing. Accordingly, as far as I gather from his description, there was a *passive bodily* ego feeling and an *active psychic* ego feeling. His super-ego had commanded him to carry out the action. This curious combination expresses in a characteristic way, "I should" (*ich soll*)—a volition in the service of the super-ego and an unwillingness of the ego. It must be added that in the course of his sleepwalking, his body ceased to be a burden and his bodily ego feeling became active. Therefore, after the resistances were overcome, and in the presence of the feeling that it was only a dream, an active will accompanied the dream activity. Similarly, in waking life, in the case of "I should", there are present, simultaneously, an activity of the willing ego and a resistance from a part of the ego. Both are expressed in the dream by the constituents of ego feeling. If we now turn to the inhibition dream—already explained by Freud in the *Interpretation of Dreams*—my own investigations<sup>9</sup> have shown that it expresses "I want to but am not allowed" (*ich darf nicht*). In this the influence of the super-ego is unconscious; there is only an awareness of the fact that the body or a part of it, strongly invested with bodily ego feeling, cannot be moved. A muscular apparatus invested with bodily ego feeling is withdrawn from the psychic ego.

The recognition of the meaning of ego feeling in dreams gives rise to a need for a new detailed investigation of these typical dream forms. My present communication is, therefore, a preliminary one. However, it can be safely asserted that the different types of investment with ego feeling—either purely psychic ego feeling or psychic plus bodily ego feeling,

---

<sup>9</sup> Federn: *ber zwei typische Traumsensationen*. Jahrb. d. Psa. VI, 1914.

active or passive, total or partial—expresses the various modalities of dream occurrences. Conversely, we shall be able to deduce the modality of the dream occurrences from the condition of ego feeling in cases where the analysis of the dream does not give it, and thereby advance psychoanalytic interpretation. The observation of ego feeling in dreams opens a new path for dream interpretation, so that we shall be able to apply the appropriate auxiliary verbs to the dream action. For, as we have shown above, these verbs express the attitude of the ego and of the super-ego toward the action, whereas the main verb conveys the alteration of the object brought about by means of an effector organ or instrument. That "I want to", "I can", "I am not allowed" and "I should" are expressed in the dream by the ego cathexis, fully corresponds to the processes in waking life. ("I have to", "I cannot" and "I am allowed" still await interpretation.) In waking life the whole ego and super-ego take definite stands in relation to an action corresponding to these auxiliary verbs; for example, in the case of "I want to", there is active psychic and bodily ego feeling, thought, impulse, and motor activity. In dreams, however, because of the withdrawal of cathexis, both motor and thought activity are usually lacking. For this reason, the differences of ego feeling are the only means which remain at the disposal of the dream to express modality. The difference between "I want to" (*ich will*), "I should", "I must", "I am allowed to" and "I can", which are so great in waking life, are expressed in dreams only by means of subtle, long-overlooked differences of ego feeling; that is to say, they are barely more than indicated. However, the poverty of this means of expression need not surprise us, for we have long since been taught by Freud that even the most powerful instinctual desires are often represented in dreams by a remote symbolism, in itself almost indiscernible and long overlooked.

In waking life, all power is returned to the ego, in particular the will. *The will is the turning of the whole active ego*

---

10 My previous theory (Federn: *Variationen des Ichgefühls*. Int. Ztschr. f. Psa. XII.) that the death instinct is intimately associated with the act of willing, as I hope to show in a future paper, is probably true and does not conflict with the above statement.

cathexis to particular activities,<sup>10</sup> whether they be mere thinking or action. To believe that the will is only a foreknowledge of an event which would occur in any case is a completely erroneous intellectualistic conception, as Klages long since proved. The ego *as a whole* has at its disposal a certain active libido cathexis which it can send out or withdraw, and *this* is the will. Active bodily ego feeling in waking life represents the materially smaller permanent cathexis of the ego. In dreams it represents the will.

The will is not mentioned in Freud's book on dreams,<sup>11</sup> for the reason that the will belongs to consciousness and to the ego. My contribution aims to amplify our knowledge of dreams, particularly by showing that willing, also, can be recognized in dreams. It is consistent with the theory of dream interpretation to believe that even small differences in cathexis with ego feeling are not insignificant and accidental, but that they too are determined—determined in the same way as the modality or the latent affect which they indicate. When future studies have added to our knowledge, these determinations will also be found of use in the interpretation of dreams.

---

<sup>11</sup> When willed actions appear themselves in the manifest dream content, they are derived, like thinking processes, from the dream material.

**Article Citation** [\[Who Cited This?\]](#)

**Federn, P.** (1932). Ego Feeling in Dreams<sup>12</sup>. *Psychoanal. Q.*, 1:511-542

## PEP-Web Copyright

**Copyright.** The PEP-Web Archive is protected by United States copyright laws and international treaty provisions.

1. All copyright (electronic and other) of the text, images, and photographs of the publications appearing on PEP-Web is retained by the original publishers of the Journals, Books, and Videos. Saving the exceptions noted below, no portion of any of the text, images, photographs, or videos may be reproduced or stored in any form without prior permission of the Copyright owners.
2. Authorized Uses. Authorized Users may make all use of the Licensed Materials as is consistent with the Fair Use Provisions of United States and international law. Nothing in this Agreement is intended to limit in any way whatsoever any Authorized User's rights under the Fair Use provisions of United States or international law to use the Licensed Materials.
3. During the term of any subscription the Licensed Materials may be used for purposes of research, education or other non-commercial use as follows:
  - a. Digitally Copy. Authorized Users may download and digitally copy a reasonable portion of the Licensed Materials for their own use only.
  - b. Print Copy. Authorized Users may print (one copy per user) reasonable portions of the Licensed Materials for their own use only.

**Copyright Warranty.** Licensor warrants that it has the right to license the rights granted under this Agreement to use Licensed Materials, that it has obtained any and all necessary permissions from third parties to license the Licensed Materials, and that use of the Licensed Materials by Authorized Users in accordance with the terms of this Agreement shall not infringe the copyright of any third party. The Licensor shall indemnify and hold Licensee and Authorized Users harmless for any losses, claims, damages, awards, penalties, or injuries incurred, including reasonable attorney's fees, which arise from any claim by any third party of an alleged infringement of copyright or any other property right arising out of the use of the Licensed Materials by the Licensee or any Authorized User in accordance with the terms of this Agreement. This indemnity shall survive the termination of this agreement. NO LIMITATION OF LIABILITY SET FORTH ELSEWHERE IN THIS AGREEMENT IS APPLICABLE TO THIS INDEMNIFICATION.

**Commercial reproduction.** No purchaser or user shall use any portion of the contents of PEP-Web in any form of commercial exploitation, including, but not limited to, commercial print or broadcast media, and no purchaser or user shall reproduce it as its own any material contained herein.