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On the Analysis of Defenses in Dreams

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ABSTRACT

This paper deals with a particular analytic approach to the clinical use of dreams: the analysis of defenses in dreams. Clinical vignettes are used to demonstrate various ways that defenses can be depicted in dreams and the manner in which the patient's attention may be drawn to those defenses. Dreams can offer an especially vivid view of defenses and hence can heighten patients' emotional conviction about the nature of their conflicts.

The purpose of this paper is to describe how the principles of defense analysis can be applied to the analysis of dreams. My intention is not to replace the basic techniques used to understand the latent dream meaning. We always need the patient's associations to place the dream in the current context of the analysis: the state of the transference, the day residue (especially the previous analytic hour), and genetic references. In this paper, however, I will not deal with these other fundamental approaches, but will focus only on defense analysis in dreams.

Freud indicated his awareness of the operation of defenses in the basic dream work in *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900) long before he developed the structural hypothesis. In the section on secondary revision, in Chapter 6, he stated that the demands of the censorship operate in a selective sense on the dream

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- 396 -

thoughts. Although Freud was occasionally of a different mind about this matter, he often viewed the censorship as an essential part of the dream work:

There can be no doubt that the censoring agency, whose influence we have so far only recognized in limitations and omissions in the dream-content, is also responsible for interpolations and additions to it (p. 489).

The idea of the ego's defensive function was already present, though not in terms of the structural theory.

Later, in the dream section of his *Introductory Lectures* (1916-1917), Freud vividly described the operation of the "censorship": it is at work "wherever a dream-element is remembered especially faintly, indefinitely and doubtfully... producing softenings, approximations and allusions ..." (p. 139). He stated that the "dream-censorship itself is ... one of the originators of the dream-distortion... We are in the habit of combining the concepts of modification and re-arrangement under the term 'displacement'" (p. 140). Freud explored the ways in which analysts could infer the latent meanings *behind* the distortions and disguises. In this paper my purpose is to study the *methods* of disguise and to suggest that when patients themselves understand these methods, and the motives for them, they are in a better position to absorb the latent dream meanings.

In 1964 Arlow and Brenner applied the concepts of structural theory to Freud's theory of dreams in ways that are most helpful, both theoretically and clinically. They demonstrated that "the dream work consists of an interplay, often a very complicated one ... among id, ego, and superego, of which the final result is the manifest dream" (p. 122). They state further that "we expect to learn from the analysis of our patients' dreams about the nature of the fears associated with their instinctual wishes, about their unconscious need to punish themselves, *and even about the defenses which at the moment they are unconsciously employing in their struggles against their wishes*" (p. 141, italics added).

- 397 -

Since there is a regression of both ego and superego functions during dreaming, with a concomitant diminution of the ego's defenses, analysts are sometimes tempted to use dreams in particular to draw their patients' attention to wishes,

fantasies, and other drive manifestations, rather than to defenses. Our patients themselves often are intensely drawn to the id content of their dreams. In fact, wishes expressed in dreams are frequently "accepted" by patients prematurely, when defense analysis is yet incomplete, and the acceptance is primarily intellectual and does not become affectively integrated.

This paper on the clinical use of dreams utilizes Gray's general approach to the analysis of defenses. In a series of papers, Gray (1973), (1982), (1986), (1987) expanded techniques for helping patients "gain full access to those habitual, unconscious and outmoded ego activities that serve resistance" (1986p. 245). The dream examples that follow were chosen to illustrate how patients avoid, mitigate, or otherwise distort the dream content. Attention is drawn, whenever possible, to the details within the dream that show how the patient uses various methods to avoid self-awareness, and to the factors that make these avoidances feel imperative at the particular moments when they occur.

Freud urged us to pay special attention to one of the most common defensive maneuvers concerning dreams told in analysis: the patient's "gloss" on a dream. We are all familiar with such dream introductions as "This dream doesn't mean much," or "I had a crazy dream," or "This is just a dream fragment," and we are aware that the patient is warding off something even before he or she tells the dream. This paper is not concerned with such glosses, but rather with defenses as they are represented *within* dreams.

The first example demonstrates a defense pictorially represented in a dream. A Protestant minister with a strongly obsessional character structure had as yet little awareness of his defenses against his assertiveness. He dreamed that he was in church with many people. "I was going to run a group. At first

- 398 -

there was some question about my running it, but then I felt very good about the way I was doing it. Then the minister came and I knew it was time for services. I was slightly regretful at this because I wanted to continue the group." After some associations to this dream, his reluctance to be competitive with the analyst emerged clearly enough to be interpreted. The patient then went on to say that group work was an area in which he was competent, whereas the analyst was not; suddenly he remembered another part of the dream: "Just before the minister came and I was still involved with the group, someone was pushing me from one side. It was crowded, and it seemed as if it might somehow come to a confrontation. But I moved and walked all around to the other side and sat where there was plenty of room." Now I was able to demonstrate a characteristic defense that was depicted by his physical activity in the dream: his circumstantiality. This defense had often been observed before. It allowed him to avoid direct communication, protecting him from knowing about his wish to assert his own competence.

In discussing the phenomenon of unexpectedly retrieving another piece of a dream in the middle of the process of association, Freud (1900) said:

Now a part of a dream that has been rescued from oblivion in this way is invariably the most important part; it always lies on the shortest road to the dream's solution and has for that reason been exposed to resistance more than any other part (pp. 518-519).

Freud was referring more to the drive components, whereas, for the purpose of this discussion, I am stressing the defensive component in this phenomenon. In this case the "most important part" of the dream contains both the patient's competitiveness *and* the defense against it. We know that the patient will be better able to fully integrate his assertiveness if the defense against it is analyzed first. The patient did not want to acknowledge the strength of his own wish to run the group and stand up to the person who was trying to push him aside. His habitual

- 399 -

defense—to go around the issue—which usually operated reflexively and silently, could vividly be brought to his awareness because he saw it dramatized in his overt behavior of going around the room in his dream.

Another example of a defensive operation depicted in the manifest content of a dream occurred in the analysis of an actress. Her defenses against affect were subtle, since overall she expressed a wide variety of feelings with real liveliness and warmth. I groped for a way to comprehend how she managed to maintain her distance from certain experiences. After about a year of analytic work, she had a nightmare:

I was in a place that had an upstairs with two rooms. In each lives a family, and I'm watching both rooms. The father in one room has chopped up every member of the family, drowned the puppy, and chopped himself up too ... I knock on the door of the other room, and they don't know what happened.

One association was to the previous session, in which she had spoken of cutting things off from each other—for example, her experiencing her analyst and herself as being in two separate cubicles. In that hour she had also spoken of her tendency to "side-step" issues, just as her father did. The patient herself had no real sense that walling off was an active defensive process in her mental life. Because of the clarity of the pictorial representation of this defense in a number

of dreams over two years, I was able to help the patient become aware of this defense in her dreams as a habitual mechanism for dealing with certain anxieties. One day she began to meaningfully experience a waking phenomenon, of which she had long been aware, but which she had never been able to put into words. Now she recognized that she had always been using this walling off technique. She said, "I've really kept one part of me separate." This example illustrates that a defense can remain so ephemeral in daily life as to be unusable in analytic interpretation, but may be more easily comprehended in a dream because of its plastic representation.

Another patient had considerable familiarity with her defenses

- 400 -

after several years of analysis. She dreamed that she was hurriedly leaving a house in which something dangerous was going on, "a fire or something." As she ran out, she saw something out of the corner of her eye, paid no attention, and just kept going. After relating the dream, she said, "I know that I really knew what was happening and that I deliberately ignored it. This is how I sometimes keep something disturbing just at the edge of my mind, hoping I won't have to deal with it." Her awareness of her defense in the dream gave her the conviction that she really knew what the danger was, and this motivated her to discover its nature. This patient spontaneously applied to her dream what she had understood about her defenses in general.

Levitan (1967) has long been interested in the relationship between dream structure and symptom formation. His clinical examples in several papers include excellent instances of defenses depicted in dreams. One illustration is from a patient with depersonalization who complained of getting a "semitransparent grey fog before her eyes through which she had to strain to perceive objects" (p. 160). She dreamed:

I am waiting for Karl, my old boyfriend... I am taking a shower—I have the old, good, excited feeling ... lovey-dovey ... the real thing ... but then the fog comes and I can't feel anything. (p. 165).

A number of other authors have discussed the analysis of dreams in which defenses are likewise depicted within dreams (Eigen, 1979); (Hobson, 1985); (Renik, 1981).

The next group of examples concerns a different aspect of defensive operations in dreams. They show how the common dream phenomenon of representing oneself in two or more people serves crucial defensive purposes. Freud was well aware that dreamers represent themselves "in a dream several times over, now directly and now through identification with extraneous persons" (1900p. 323). Although Freud did not explicitly state that this expresses the defensive functions of the ego,

- 401 -

such an idea is implied in his description of the dreamer "*disguised* behind the figures of other people" (1923p. 120, **italics added**). In these varied self-representations, we have a rich source of dream indicators of defenses at work. In our dreams we all have the potential of being multiple personalities, and, like individuals with actual multiple personalities, we do not recognize that we inhabit those other people. Since the motive for the disguise is the unacceptability of some aspect of oneself, the most helpful use of a patient's observing capacities may at first be *not* to undo the displacement, but to focus instead on what it is about the "other person" in the dream that seems so shameful or prohibited. Eventually, of course, patients need to become aware of their motives for disowning those qualities in themselves. But if patients try prematurely to acknowledge the drive as their own, their understanding frequently remains intellectual at best, or, at worst, other defenses are mobilized.

The following example illustrates how various defenses against the drives can be called forth in a series of moments in a single dream. It is presented here to demonstrate the occurrence of such a sequence rather than to suggest how those defenses might be interpreted clinically. The mother of two little girls dreamed that she had taken her daughters to the dentist. She said,

The whole dream was scary. I first saw Rita sitting in the dentist's chair. I got more and more worried that the dentist might hurt her. Then after a while, somehow it was myself sitting in the chair, and the dentist had his hands in my mouth and I became afraid that he would hurt me. Then it was Liz sitting in the chair and I was watching her, worrying about her getting hurt. Then it was me in the chair again and I got more and more angry at him and finally as I shouted at him, "Get your fucking hands out of my mouth," I woke up.

For most of the dream the dentist was the overtly assaultive one. The patient's anxiety mounted as she witnessed the onslaught directed toward her daughters, and for a time the defense of

- 402 -

identification with the victim (**a phenomenon described by Orgel in 1974**) permitted her to continue dreaming. When in the position of being attacked, she was able to tolerate feeling her own mounting drive arousal for a while, but even in that context she had to wake up, as she experienced her aggression more sharply and fully. It is noteworthy that the anxiety associated with the bombardment directed toward herself did not wake her—that only her own eruption was intolerable. This was indeed a woman whose ego ideal was heavily invested in being always kind and who greatly feared her own sadism.

Focusing only on the vicissitudes of the defenses against the drives in the previous dream leaves out the important issue of what was the nature of those drives that felt so dangerous. One might speculate that it concerned a feared attack on the analyst, who also uses the mouth as an organ of manipulation. Or it might refer to a more general hostile attitude toward males and their sexual function (particularly in view of the use of the word "fucking"). However important the drive components of the dreamed behavior may be, the woman's analysis will be facilitated if she can *first* observe her compelling need to fend off her own sadism in a number of different ways—projection, identification with the victim, and reaction formation.

Another woman in analysis dreamed about being "in a strange place—maybe a hospital. A woman was there—I guess that's you—and also a man in a white coat. He reminds me of my previous analyst." (Note how she displaced away from the transference within the dream.) "I tell the woman to be careful because I'm afraid she doesn't know what she's doing." The patient then thought of the previous day when she had seen a breast specialist about a prospective biopsy of what was thought to be a benign lump in her breast. Despite the doctor's overall reassuring attitude, he had said some things that frightened her. The idea of losing a breast made her think about losing her female side, "which I never felt I had enough of. My mother contributed to that—the way she was always showing and

- 403 -

touching her own body. It wasn't looking at her that was scary, but the feelings I'd get, the actual genital feelings. What makes you so sure that it's beneficial to explore my masculine side here? I'm not so sure. Like with my son [aged seven], I'm not so sure I'd want him to get back his knowledge of his female side from when he was four, when he loved dolls. Now that's all unacceptable to him."

I said she was indicating that she feared that her masculine side might become acceptable if she talked about it more here. She replied, "Isn't that the point in here? To accept all of yourself? ... I'm afraid I'll get stuck there." I commented, "So maybe I don't know what I'm doing. I'm not careful enough." The patient then remembered another part of her dream: "I started to wrestle with the woman, who then turned into a child, a baby who is deformed, and then turned into a small package which I tried to kill. I really wanted to get rid of it." Focusing on the representation of the defense, I said, "The part you didn't remember has to do with something you want to get rid of." Patient: "Yes, that was very dramatic, how much I wanted to get rid of that package. It seems somehow it's sexual. I don't know why, I just think it must be ... I've had the fantasy that A's [her baby girl] clitoris is so large, too large, that maybe she has a penis. Before analysis, I really had no knowledge about my own anatomy. I thought the clitoris was where you urinated. The really scary part is that I'm like my mother—how she was always so interested in bodies, and that it really was erotic for her and that it's the same with me. I'm afraid I'm hooked up wrong—I'm homosexual or at best autoerotic."

Since this was a patient well into her analysis and able to associate quite freely at times, one could most likely have arrived at the same material in many different ways, perhaps even without the analyst saying anything. Clearly, this patient was already aware of her homosexual urges, but was having considerable anxiety about them. My choice of emphasizing the intensity with which she wanted to rid herself of something was determined by the view that what would be most useful to her was to

- 404 -

become more aware of the struggle within her, the struggle not to know more about this aspect of herself. As is evident from her associations, she was quite ready to talk about her homosexuality, but equally evident is the strong self-critical tone connected with these thoughts. The issue was not making the homosexual material conscious—this very cooperative patient already had in mind a program of what she was "supposed" to do in analysis. Yet, until she could understand more about what was making her fearful and critical about her wishes, she could not really "own" these impulses; she would go on producing thoughts about them, *always* disapproving of those thoughts, and in that way managing partly to disavow them as her own impulses.

In the dream about the dentist described above, we noted the significance of the shift in the identity of the person "owning" the forbidden impulse. A shift of identity also occurred in the hospital dream just presented: the woman changed to a child and then to a package. One could speculate that in the second example, the wish to kill could surface only when the object had shifted from a human being to something impersonal. As we all know, such transformations of identity are

common in dreams and often give important clues as to where the danger lies that necessitates projection or displacement. The technical issue to which I want to draw attention here is the usefulness of minutely drawing the patient's attention to the *methods* his or her mind uses at moments of uneasiness.

A man with a life-long struggle with his ambivalent feelings toward his younger brother dreamed as follows:

I was taking a three-year-old boy to the doctor because he had something wrong with his fingernail. The doctor was supposed to help him, but I couldn't stop the doctor from hurting him. I picked him up and tried to stop it. Then I was being tortured the same way—I couldn't stop it either, and I started to feel that I don't have to take this. I woke myself up. I realized that it was my sense of helplessness that made me wake up.

- 405 -

The patient immediately associated to his brother. He remembered that he had enjoyed holding him, as in the dream, and that the brother actually had had trouble with one of his nails. He recalled how adorable his brother had been when he was little and how often he had felt loving and protective toward him. He wished that in his adult life there would have continued to be such feelings between them, and he regretted the current lack of genuine friendship. He was conscious of his present strong sense of resentment toward his brother and of his wish to have some achievements parallel to his. Yet his dream makes clear the strong fear of the wish that his brother be hurt and defective. At the end, his emphasis on his sense of helplessness is clearly a defense against feeling aggressive. Although he said it was his helplessness that woke him, the point at which he *actually* awoke was when he started to oppose the mistreatment—"I don't have to take this." His dream tells us that he achieves restraint by means similar to those of the woman at the dentist's, and also by turning the aggression against himself. In contrast to the dental patient, who woke up when she herself was about to "bite" her tormentor, this patient's defense arose sooner—before he could feel the wish to torment. For this reason, it was not yet useful to emphasize the drive aspect in the analytic work. He needed first to understand the depth of the insult to his ideal as a nice person embodied by such sadistic impulses, before he could begin to really feel them.

The next dream example contains abundant drive derivatives of aggression, but I have again placed the major emphasis on a specific defense in the dream. This patient suffered from anxiety and depression; her intense rage at being mistreated by the world was surpassed only by her excoriating criticism of herself. While staying with her sister, who had several cats, she dreamed that the apartment was overrun by rats and the cats wouldn't do anything about it. "There were rats and horrible strangers dressed in black." Then she saw the "head rabbi" on television. With a tone of scorn toward herself, she described how she had prostrated herself before him, saying "forgive me," and asking

- 406 -

him to make the rats go away. Her first thoughts after telling the dream were about finishing some work late and being dissatisfied with its quality. She had been very anxious and critical about her work the previous night. She then elaborated on her depressed feelings about everything going wrong.

It seemed to me that the inhibition of aggression in this dream was particularly striking, so I remarked that the cats were unable to do anything about the rats. Her response was that this week at her office she had been feeling that "the rats are crawling over me" (she frequently referred to the men she disliked at work as rats), and she had felt that she needed to be particularly careful about revealing her feelings. She then mentioned that she realized that the people in black in her dream knew she was bad and that a woman, J, was among them. She had not mentioned this detail before, so I inquired about J. "She's not doing very well ... she drinks too much." I then reminded her that in a previous session she had found it very painful to speak about her mother's drinking. She agreed, saying that maybe that was why J was in the dream. She then said that her aunt was alcoholic and a "total wreck," and she remembered that her cousin had just called. With increasingly vituperative affect, mixed with some guilt, she began to attack various members of her family.

This dream could, of course, be approached in many different ways. With the patient's associations leading to considerable self-recrimination and to her fears of herself as an attacker, it seemed to me that her capacity to observe her conflict might best be facilitated by drawing her attention to her need to inhibit aggression *even* in her dream. This premise was borne out by the patient's then being able increasingly to "own" her aggressive impulses as the hour went on.

In the example just given, I mentioned the patient's difficulty in a previous hour in speaking about her mother's drinking. Her dream of that previous hour illustrates a phenomenon familiar to all analysts—the omission of visual details in telling a dream. The patient had related her dream as follows:

- 407 -

It was about an escape from kidnapers. There was some other person in it ... like a movie ... I wasn't in it at all, some unknown character. This person went to a place of depraved people, people who drank too much, who were torturing cats. They were somehow stretching them, and I realized one of the cats was Daisy [one of her sister's

cats]. I tried to substitute another cat for Daisy... Oh, so I *am* in it, but I was just sort of there ... everyone else was behaving swinishly ... and yet everyone was frolicking around at the end.

She had told another dream before this one and now commented on how unusual it was for both of her dreams to have upbeat endings. Her affect at that moment was actually unusually cheerful, as her associations went to some people taking a real interest in her work yesterday, and how this felt like a "ray of sunshine." The idea of kidnapping made her think of taking Monday off and getting a lot of work done and enjoying it very much. She elaborated on the feeling of ease and satisfaction in that work and what a pleasure it had been last night to have been offered a professional opportunity. I mentioned that the atmosphere in her dreams seemed similar—a feeling of ease as opposed to her usual sense of oppression. She replied, "Exactly. And these dreams were not so disturbing either, despite the cats' torture." I suggested that the lack of disturbance might be connected with her being a distant observer. Her immediate response was to relate new dream details: "Well, I was disturbed by the drunken couple, especially the woman." When I asked what she thought might have made her avoid these details before, she filled in with ample details about the woman drinking and demanding more, falling all over the man, staggering, and generally behaving in an "unseemly" manner. She then accused herself of being a "consummate prig." When her attention was drawn to her just having turned her criticism from the drunken woman to herself, as if she needed to spare the woman the full venom of her feelings, her associations led to her mother's drinking, a subject that was exceedingly difficult for her to talk about. (It is interesting to note that when asked about her

- 408 -

reason for leaving out certain details, the patient responded by complying with what she *thought* the analyst was really asking for—more details. This is a common occurrence and is an example of a patient's avoiding analysis of defense, preferring instead to submit to the analyst's influence.)

Since patients more often than not leave out consciously available details of dreams, I have found it useful to be alert to specific moments when the patient seems to be leaving out some details. My sense is that drawing attention to such moments is more helpful than asking the patient to retell the dream as a whole, because this allows the focus of attention to remain on the level of the defense being used just then. Asking the patient to review the whole dream invites a different level of ego functioning, often a more distant mode of observation. In the example just given, the patient was able to actually feel her need to distance herself from the painful view of her mother. The avoidance of details for defensive purposes is, of course, a frequent occurrence in all analytic work, not only in telling a dream.

Another important source of studying defenses in dreams is the representation of the superego. Before the structural theory, punishment dreams seemed to refute the wish-fulfillment theory of dreams. However, with the realization that the need for criticism and punishment could be powerful motivators, this contradiction disappeared. Thus, in 1923 Freud said that in punishment dreams

actually nothing belonging to the latent dream-thoughts is taken up into the manifest content of the dream. Something quite different appears instead, which must be described as a *reaction formation* against the dream-thoughts, a rejection and complete contradiction of them. Such offensive action as this against the dream can only be ascribed to the critical agency of the ego [soon to be called the superego] and it must therefore be assumed that the latter, provoked by the unconscious wish-fulfillment, has been temporarily re-established even during the sleeping state (p. 118, italics added).

- 409 -

Two paragraphs later, he added, "It is only a short step ... to the replacement of a characteristic portion of the content of a dream by a defensive contradiction ..." (p. 119). Freud emphasized the *effects* of defensive operations rather than describing their visual representations in dreams.

Actually, one can view any "barrier" element in a dream as a superego representation—that is, any element that functions as a restrainer of a drive derivative can be a superego derivative and hence can be used as a defense. To be more specific, such obstacles to id representations can be in the form of pictured inanimate deterrents—roadblocks, walls, brakes, railings, dams—or, very commonly, personified prohibitors, such as police or other figures of authority. Very important references to the superego are often contained in the facial expression or tone of voice of a person in a dream. (This reflects the well-known effect of the parental face and voice on the early moral development of the child.) Patients not infrequently casually mention, almost in passing, that a person in the dream had some expression on his or her face. If the analyst draws attention to this facial expression—if only by pointing out the casualness of the reference—very significant material about nonverbal communication is revealed. Isakower's (1939), (1954) strong emphasis on the fundamental importance of the auditory sphere in the formation of the superego and its representation in dreams is well known.

The "head rabbi" dream already described provides a striking example of a powerful authority externalized in the dream, with the patient lowering herself, like a child, asking forgiveness. This dream element illustrates regression of ego and superego function, dramatizing the early origins of the superego. Of greater interest for the study of defensive processes is the timing of the invocation of this authority to get rid of the rats, which represent the impulses run amok and threatening the dreamer because she feared she could not control them by her own powers. What better rescue than to reach for a higher authority

- 410 -

to inhibit the drive. It is a repetition of the child's use of parental images as auxiliary ego, before they are solidly internalized. In listening to the flow of the patient's associations, it is frequently helpful to note the particular moment when the patient feels compelled to reach for such a powerful inhibitor. As the "head rabbi" patient became increasingly aware of such moments, the imperative nature of her defenses appeared clearer to her. She then could question the obligatory quality of superego interdictions. One might ask why a *dream* is necessary for such analytic work. In the instance at hand, the regressive state provided by the dream helped this highly intellectual young woman to recognize how her archaic morality still dominated her emotional life. Seeing herself prostrate before the rabbi dramatically revealed to her that her cherished self-image of having an emancipated, sophisticated set of moral beliefs was not the whole story. Seeing is believing.

Another dream example that includes defenses against the awareness of guilt comes from the analysis of a man who suffered from impotence following the death of his wife of twenty years. After many months of mourning, he had started becoming interested in women again and after about a year began a more serious involvement. To his great dismay, he remained impotent and therefore sought treatment. He dreamed as follows:

I was having a massage by a man. I was lying on my stomach and he was massaging my back. Suddenly, I realized he was lying on me naked, but I didn't feel his erect penis touching me. Then he whispered close by my ear, "Shall I come inside you?" I was horrified and said, "Are you crazy? First of all, the door to the room is open, and secondly, haven't you heard of AIDS?" I woke up feeling extremely anxious.

His associations were first about the inability to feel the man's erect penis, which he thought very strange. He did not recognize the dramatic negation involved (an instance of a defense

- 411 -

depicted within the dream itself), or the fact that he had attributed to the other man the absent erection from which he was suffering himself. Then he spoke about his feeling of horror at the very thought of a man behaving that way—that is, his horror at someone frankly expressing a completely forbidden sexual impulse. I pointed out that even the feeling of horror was not a sufficient deterrent to action—that he had also felt it necessary to recite reasons why such impulses should be banned, one of which would result in the direst punishment of all. While he contemplated this awesome punishment, he remembered another part of the dream: he had had the sense that the house was haunted. The house being haunted made him think of the continued presence of his wife in his thoughts. And now he realized that it always felt as if his wife were looking in through his open bedroom door. Bringing this patient's attention to his need to call upon powerful superego punishments led him to recover additional dream material, and then to become aware of how much his guilt was involved in his current symptom. Later, he was able to understand that his wife's presence had helped to protect him against awareness of his repressed homosexual impulses.

In the examples given, I have tried to demonstrate that interpreting the ways in which patients defend against drives and affects within their dreams is helpful. When patients become more aware of how and why they reflexively believe they cannot tolerate certain unpleasant psychic states, they may be willing to risk more. One reason that dreams can be an especially fertile ground for expanding self-knowledge is that they are among the safest places for trial action.

DISCUSSION

In this paper I have addressed the topic of defenses as they are revealed within dreams themselves; I have not dealt with the

- 412 -

defenses employed external to the dream. For example, the particular moment that a dream appears in the associative flow of an analytic hour often has defensive significance—a subject that also deserves further consideration. In addition, the gloss on a dream, as already mentioned, is sometimes a major clue to the conflict with which the patient is struggling at the time the dream is told. Since the dream is being related *to the analyst*, the patient's transference conflicts are also involved. Thus hesitations, avoidances, and other signs of caution in revealing something to the analyst are often present.

However, these manifestations of defense are not different from those connected with any other associative material. This paper focuses not on such defenses but rather on the analytic use of a patient's defenses from within the dream itself.

The fluctuating level of regression while dreaming is significant in relation to defenses in dreams. Some of the examples I have discussed illustrate Arlow and Brenner's point that "the degree of regression of any single function may vary from moment to moment during dreaming" (1964p. 136). The phenomenon of becoming conscious that one is dreaming is an extreme example of the return during a dream of the usually absent function of reality testing. Arlow and Brenner pointed out that, "As Freud realized long ago, in most cases the temporary improvement in reality testing ... serves a defensive function: it prevents or minimizes the development of anxiety or of other unpleasure during a dream" (p. 137). LaBerge, et al. (1986), in the sleep research laboratory at Stanford University, studied *lucid dreaming*, the occurrence of awareness of dreaming within a dream. LaBerge has demonstrated the important fact that one can be aware of dreaming *while remaining in REM sleep*. Indeed, he has been able to train subjects to evoke this awareness at will. One application of his work has been to help persons suffering from chronic nightmares to gain more control over their dreams by learning to become lucid dreamers. Following the clinical thesis of this paper, the focus in analyzing dreams containing

- 413 -

this phenomenon would naturally be on why the defense, "this is only a dream," becomes necessary at the particular moment when it occurs.

In some of my dream discussions it may seem that I am dealing with dreams as coherent narratives, exactly the opposite of Freud's emphasis on dealing with each dream element independently if one is interested in finding the latent content. In fact, in those instances (such as the woman at the dentist's), I have analyzed a series of individual elements in which defenses were mobilized against specific impulses. It is only the sequential arrangement of such individual elements that appears to form a coherent narrative.

One might ask whether analyzing these defensive elements is just working on the level of the manifest content of the dream. I think not, since the dynamic significance of such elements is not in the patients' awareness. The manifest representation of the defense is a condensation, displacement, or symbol of the defense. The fact that interpretation of the symbolized defense not infrequently evokes recall of additional dream material demonstrates its analogy to defense analysis of other analytic material.

A discussion of secondary revision is relevant here, since it was often the appearance of a defense that led to transitional moments within the dream examples given. When Freud stated that "the censoring agency ... is ... responsible for interpolations and additions" to the dream content, he said that they are "introduced at points at which they can serve as links ... or to bridge a gap between two parts of the dream" (1900p. 489). I suggest that the concurrence of defensive activity with certain transitional moments in dreams indicates a crucial defensive function of secondary revision, though its other integrative functions are well known.

Freud contradicted himself about secondary revision: he included it in the basic dream work at certain times and excluded it at others. Stein (1989) suggests that Freud had difficulty conceptualizing

- 414 -

secondary revision because originally he was limited by the topographic model. Once we utilize the structural theory, the dream work must necessarily involve id, ego, and superego throughout (Arlow and Brenner, 1964). However, Stein (1987) reminds us that "we often use the topographic and structural frames of reference alternately" (p. 63), and he mentions the value of the topographic model for conceptualizing the complexity of fluctuating levels of consciousness. In his paper on the role of secondary revision (1989), he details the rich and wide range of influences involved and demonstrates the value of both models.

We know that revision of associative material goes on continuously during an analytic hour, especially for defensive reasons in relation to the transference. As Silber (1973) has demonstrated, revision of a dream continues in the analyst's presence as the hour progresses. Silber was the first to suggest limiting the use of the term *secondary revision* to "that aspect of censorship or defence applicable to disguising from the individual his understanding of his own dream" (p. 165). He suggested using the term *secondary elaboration* for the usually silent ego function whose "object is to heighten the disguise of the dream in relation to the person (the analyst in this instance) to whom the dream is being reported" (p. 165). Breznitz (1971) proposed "differentiating between 'primary revision', which is part of the dream-work, 'secondary revision', which takes place after a tentative dream has been already prepared, and 'tertiary revision', which operates after awakening" (p. 412). I think the reason these distinctions have not caught on is that revisions of conflicted psychic content are going on constantly, particularly in the presence of a person who has profound transference significance.

Differentiating between superego and ego is often extremely difficult when studying defenses in dreams. Stein (1966) made exactly this observation when he wrote of the blurred border between superego and ego as being "most evident in

states as sleep and the analytic situation ..." (p. 294). This would suggest that in dreaming, the superego and ego are frequently in harmony—that is, when an individual's moral standards are not in conflict, there is no way to observe distinctions between ego and superego function. However, one advantage of trying to analyze defenses in dreams is that the origins of the superego function often become particularly vivid. In his paper on the analysis of the superego, Gray (1987) emphasized the technical advantage of approaching superego manifestations from the point of view of hierarchical functions of the ego (p. 152). He pointed out that the internalization of external authority "is not so stable structurally that its reprojection cannot regularly recur in varying degrees" (p. 149). Because of the regression of ego and superego functions in dreams, one can frequently observe the graphic re-externalization of various kinds of authority. Hence the use of authorities as inhibitors of forbidden impulses is often especially clear, as has been illustrated in some of the dream examples in this paper. Those examples that show forbidden aspects of the dreamer represented by other people in the dream demonstrate defenses against guilt. Thus analysis of defenses in dreams will invariably result in analysis of superego functions as well.

SUMMARY

Since the analysis of defenses in dreams turns out to be entirely analogous to any other defense analysis, one might ask why one should pay such special attention to this aspect of dreams. My experience has suggested several reasons. Sometimes, as in the very first dream example provided in this paper, the vividness with which patients are able to experience defense as a very active function of the mind is greater when they observe themselves dramatizing it in actual behavior in a dream. Secondly, the interpretation of a defense in a dream often evokes additional

dream material that is of heightened significance for the very reason that it was previously hidden behind the defense. Finally, since people are most cautious or fearful about just those aspects of themselves that are warded off, analysis of dream defenses provides the patient a particularly safe place in which to dare knowing more about the unacceptable.

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- 417 -

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