Psychoanalytic Training Institute of the Contemporary Freudian Society

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Course 1C: Unconscious Fantasy and Dream Interpretation: Basic Concepts III - Listening for Unconscious Symbolism

Freud can be read from the PEP Web.


Class 1- 9/17

Objective: For this class we will examine two of Freud’s early papers, pre-dating the end of his ‘seduction theory’ and before the birth of the structural theory. Both works demonstrate his early thinking about the significance of childhood memory, trauma, early ideas about defense and abreaction, nodal points, and chain of associations- all of which are relevant to understanding unconscious process and phantasy. Some points of discussion include the place of memory and psychic reality, the meaning of defense, and the technique of free association.


Class 2- 9/24

Objective: The “Two Principles of Mental Functioning”, according to Freud, are the pleasure principle and the reality principle. These principles interact and collide with one another as the mind develops through compromises that satisfy the principles of pleasure and reality. The paper offers Freud’s beginning understanding of how the psychic apparatus manages wish fulfillment with the impediments of reality (frustration) laying the foundation for the emerging
unconscious constructions. Throughout Freud’s writings on dreams, he maintains that in every dream an unconscious wish is fulfilled and will be revealed when the latent content is analyzed. Even in dreams, a wish appears in the manifest content, there is a disguised unconscious wish.

We will not read “Beyond the Pleasure Principle” in its entirety for this course, but do read section II where Freud considers how dreams that are undisguised and based on “traumatic neuroses” represent the ego’s attempt to master a painful situation that has overwhelmed the psyche.

We will consider the repetition compulsion and its function in compromise formation and as an intricate defensive web, from which we can glean unconscious fantasy, as we discuss contemporary clinical work

Read: Freud S. (1911) The Two Principles of Mental Functioning

Freud S. (1920) Beyond the Pleasure Principle – Part II pgs. 11-17

Class 3- 10/1

Objective: to learn the key concepts of Freudian dream analysis

The Interpretation of Dreams will be read selectively, to provide an understanding of classical dream theory and technique.

Read: Chapter II- The Method of Interpreting Dreams 96-122 (Specimen Dream-psychoanalytic method)

- the psychoanalytic method
- day residue
- wish fulfillment

Class 4- 10/15

Read Chapter III- A Dream is the Fulfillment of a Wish (122-134)

Chapter IV Distortion in Dreams (134-163)

Class 5- 10/22

Chapter VI Dream Work (selected readings)
Focus on:

279 condensation –

central to the formulation of the manifest dream, acieves brevity and overlap fuses disparate elements possessing one common denominator into a composite whole – one person from one period of life shows up in another context. strikes a compromise between censorship, free expression and fantasy

Impossible to figure out how much condensation, fragmentary remnant
Associations to each part of a dream

282 Dream of the Botanical Monograph
read- nodal pint from which chains of associations occur
- elements are overdetermined – determined by multiple causes, many times over--represented many times over, page 180 (read)

With all of this in mind, Freud argues that the elements "botanical" and "monograph" came into the dream because they possessed copious contacts with the majority of the dream-thoughts—that is, because "they constituted 'nodal points' upon which a great number of the dream thoughts converged, and because they had several meanings in connection with the interpretation of the dream" (6.2.11).

Freud suggests that this important insight could be phrased another way: "each of the elements of the dream's content turns out to have been 'overdetermined'—to have been represented in the dream-thoughts many times over" (6.2.11).

With this in mind, Freud concludes that "[n]ot only are the elements of a dream determined by the dream-thoughts many times over, but the individual dream-thoughts are represented in the dream by several elements" (6.2.13).

In Freud's view, "[a]ssociative paths lead from one element of the dream to several dream-thoughts, and from one dream-thought to several elements of the dream" (6.2.13).

Freud goes on to argue that the "manifest" content of our dreams doesn't function like government representatives. As he says, it isn't the case that each individual piece of "manifest" content has been chosen to represent a very specific group of dream-thoughts.

Instead, the dream-thoughts are represented by several surface-level elements of the dream, and those "manifest" elements find their way into the dream precisely because they are "overdetermined"—that is, because they relate to multiple aspects of the dream.
the "certain plant" in the dream becomes a symbol of Freud's work on the medicinal properties of cocaine—as well as a symbol of his mixed feelings about that work.

Freud viewed his work on the coca-plant with both positive and negative associations: positive, because he prided himself on having made important contributions to anesthesiology; and negative, because his recommended use of cocaine as a painkiller led to the death of his friend and colleague Ernst Fleischl von Marxow. With this in mind, the symbolic significance of the "certain plant" in the dream doesn't just relate to the coca-plant itself, but to a whole slew of Freud's professional ambitions and anxieties as well.

Freud offers another example from his records—a dream from an elderly woman patient. In it, the patient "called to mind that she had two may-beetles in a box and that she must set them free or they would suffocate. She opened the box and the may-beetles were in an exhausted state. One of them flew out of the open window; but the other was crushed by the casement while she was shutting it at someone's request. (Signs of disgust.)" (6.2.26).

Freud recounts some of the associations that his patient made during their analysis of the dream, including a number of memories related to "cruelty to animals" (6.2.27). Those memories led the patient to reflect on scenes from George Eliot's novel Adam Bede, on early memories from her marriage, and on memories of being courted before she was married. She also reflects on a number of scenes and passages in other novels and theatrical performances—all related to themes of love, pleasure, and sexuality (6.2.27-34).

As Freud notes, their collaborative analysis of the dream made it perfectly clear that a whole slew of memories, thoughts, and feelings related to the patient's experiences of love, sex, and marriage had been condensed into a very simple dream that seemed, at first glance, to have nothing at all to do with sexuality.

Contemporary clinical papers on dream work


Recommended


Readings for Classes 7 -10 will focus on the development of symbolism and how analysts work with representations of unconscious process in clinical practice. We will be thinking about how “dream states” manifest during the course of the analytic hour and consider the ways in which analysts, in their own minds, transform concrete communication into psychic reality. Considerations of how dream states can be used to modify the static repetition of trauma states in patients with compromised ego structure will also be addressed.

Class 7 and 8- 11/5 and 11/12

Objective: To examine the necessary foundation to develop the capacity for symbolism and/or representational thinking

Winnicott – 1945- primitive emotional development
Winnicott- 1949 mind and its relationship to the psyche- soma

Recommended:


Class 9 – 11/19

Class 10-11/26