



Dreams and Transference

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Every psychoanalytic enterprise must render tribute to Sigmund Freud, who left so many ideas open to further development. Dreams and transference is one of these topics.

At one point Freud emphatically states that the only valid interest one can have toward the manifest dream is that it is the „Royal Road“ to that of what we are not conscious, to „the latent dream content,“ to which we arrive by the analysis of the events of the dream day and by free associations. He adds (1915, 1917, p. 181) that „It is natural that we should lose some of our interest in the manifest dream. ... In general one must avoid seeking to explain one part of the manifest dream by another, as though the dream had been coherently conceived and was a logically arranged narrative.“

Freud was persistent in his search for truth and the range of his enquiry often led him into contradictions left open for later research to clarify. In fact, Freud (1905, pp. 64ff) contradicts his above statements when he interprets the „First Dream“ where Spanjaard (1969, p. 224) correctly shows that Freud’s ‘interpretation of the superficial and contemporary conflict is identical with the manifest dream content.’ Thus, Spanjaard, after Erikson (1954) and other Freudians, returns its indicative value to the manifest dream, which is also true for Fromm (1951, 1979), who followed Freud’s method of dream interpretation to reach an ample knowledge of the latent content. It is true that the ideograph of the manifest dream may often seem absurd, confused, incoherent, but it does lead us to the coherent intrinsic logic of what has so far been

unconscious to the therapeutic dyad; the latent content becomes clear and precise as the psychoanalytic dialogue progresses.

It is valid to compare the responses to the Rorschach test and the dream since both are valuable indicators of unconscious material; the understanding of either of them requires experience, patience, and close attention. Sometimes the manifest dream allows us to formulate some tentative affirmations subject to later confirmation, but above all the dream imposes questions, the answers of which will emerge in our continued dialogue with the dreamer, for he alone has these answers that will allow us to grasp the intimate overall symbol of his dreams, thus revealing the unconscious latent content. Quite often our analyst does not realize what he has revealed, or his insight is indescribable.

Fromm (1951, p. 28) formulated a simple, self-evident fact about dreams. Man has two poles of experiencing: his waking state and his dreams. A direct corollary is that our waking experiences will help us understand the latent content of our dreams, and our dreams will help us comprehend what is amiss in our waking lives because of the intrusion of those strivings of which we are unconscious.

For Freud, as for Fromm, dreams are expressed symbolically, much like myths and legends. Aside from the fact that each segment of a dream is a symbol, one could add that the totality of the dream must be appraised as a global symbol of the dreamer. I wish to suggest that this global symbol represents, at the same time, an instantaneous snapshot of that moment of his



being. As in the theater, each and every element of the scenario serves to outstand some significant characteristic of our subject. Seen teleologically, it is as if the sites presented as well as the actors and the rest of the cast have been chosen for what they reveal, thus helping to demysticize the dreamer. Nothing in the scenario is in excess and at some time during the course of the psychoanalysis we shall „know“ the totality in an insightful way, difficult to describe—in a „gut way“ we will comprehend the role of all. Often we begin to „feel“ the dream segment by segment with all our questions and affirmations alive in us. Little by little we understand this or that symbol, be it conventional, accidental, or universal; as Usual, they are a condensation of multiple stimuli. Because of the latter, I believe it is an error to jump to the conclusion that such figure is of necessity mother or father, or that another is a penis or vagina; this may well be the case by-and-large, but we can wait until all is revealed unequivocally.

The immediate communication of the manifest dream gives us a glimpse into the latent content, within the confines of the dream day context and our present knowledge of our analysis; this glimpse allows for some tentative affirmations and obliges us to formulate many questions in our minds, all related to the specific manifest pictograph related to us. These questions guide us in our inquiry much as the pattern of a dress, whose lines show us where to Cut and to sew in order to achieve a harmonious whole. It should be clear by how that what we began to affirm tentatively, and all our pending questions must be assumed as mere indicators; otherwise we will fall into a mistake so plainly expressed in Zen-Buddhism: „When with your finger you point at the moon, do not confuse your finger with the moon.“ With patience and the help of the dreamer, the latent content of his dreams will dawn on us; thus, we will come to the inner experience of what the global symbol of the total dream tells us, as we shall know what the partial symbols express.

In our clinical practice we come to grasp the intimacy of some dreams, not all; always there will be questions left pending. Dreams are the „Royal Road“ to that of which we are unconscious and consequently will lead us to ever

more significant insights. In contrast to Freud, Fromm (1979, pp. 72 and 95) states that only some dreams fulfill wishes and that the majority of them tend to objectify our present situation and, not too infrequently, allow us insight into the personality of others. All this is to the point if we realize that for Fromm (1967, p. 4) „the sociobiological function of what we are conscious is to become aware of all that is meaningful to me if I am to survive. ... To dream while sleeping ... is the state of mind in which man ... is free.“ And Fromm states (p. 3), „As a psychoanalyst I must add that the unconscious does not exist, but we have or we do not have awareness of something. ... What I wish to stress in this respect is that I'm not referring to a site but to a human function: to be conscious or to be unconscious.“

Fromm later adds (p. 6), „Freud never considered the most efficient of repressions ... that which emerges from the fear engendered in man by all the societies in history... Society punishes with death, loss of freedom, hunger, poverty, shame or ostracism any of her members who dares threaten her structure and/or her norms“: We have seen too many examples of „non-persons“ because they have been denied passports or other „identity cards.“ The family passes onto the child what he must know so as not to be repulsed by his social group. Thus, we are conscious only of those experiences that pass the social filters, the mass fiction chosen as necessary conditions so that the behavior of the group is deemed appropriate.

“With all due respect for the striking significance of Freud's discovery of the *individual* motivations for repression, I must say that his goal of making conscious what was unconscious should have as a primary condition the need to exercise all *critical* thinking as social *criticism*, as a critique of the prevalent ideologies, for without this man is the prey of those categories society builds into that of which we are unconscious and which leads us to convince ourselves that „common sense“ is reasonable, moral, rational and logical.” (Fromm, 1967, p. 10)

In relation to the transference we must say that although it seems that Freud restricts it to those



feelings aroused during infancy toward mother and father, he gives evidence, in his *aere perennis* (to recapture Ferenczi) *The Interpretation of Dreams*, that he transferred unto some of his friends the ambiguity and the conflicts he had experienced toward his nephew John, stated explicitly in pages 231, 424, and 483-486, and 513 where he writes of his „need“ to repeat these processes (see also Jones, 1953; Bonaparte, Freud, and Kris, 1954).

Fromm (1962) does not deny that in the transference one repeats infantile behavior patterns related to our parents, but he also extends this phenomenon to its social level and signals, that because of the social filters the transference is intimately related to the alienation of the subject (p. 52ff):

“Undoubtedly, Freud’s interpretation of the transference phenomenon has much truth in it, and is ‘supported by a good deal of evidence. Yet it is not a complete interpretation. ... The neurotic grown-up patient is an alienated human being; he does not feel strong, he is frightened and inhibited because he does not experience himself ... in order to overcome his sense of inner emptiness and impotence, he chooses an object onto whom he projects all his own human qualities: his love, intelligence, courage, etc. ... This mechanistic, idolatric worship of an object, based on the fact of the individual’s alienation, is the central dynamism of transference. ... Thus the content of transference is usually related to infantile patterns while its intensity is the result of the patient’s alienation.”

And later Fromm (1979, p. 41ff) adds:

“The transference phenomenon, namely the voluntary dependence of a person on other persons in authority ... have their basis in the sense of helplessness of the child which leads to its dependence on the parents... What is often overlooked, however, is the fact that the adult is helpless too... The adult, like the child, is longing for somebody who would make him feel certain, secure, safe.”

Freud’s idea is refuted that what is transferred is

only a childhood experience. The experience of vulnerability and helplessness date since infancy and may continue through our adult years, for

“the adult is in many ways no less helpless. Indeed, he can work and fulfill tasks ascribed to him by society; but he is also more aware than the infant of the dangers and risks of life; he knows of the natural and social forces he cannot control, the accidents he cannot foresee, the sickness and death he cannot elude. What would be more natural, under the circumstances, than man’s frantic longing for a power which gives him certainty, protection and love? ... If human beings—men and women—could find Mother for the rest of their lives, life would be relieved of its risks and of its tragedy. Should we be surprised that man is driven so relentlessly to pursue this *fata morgana*?” (Fromm, 1964, p. 97ff)

We must never forget that the binomial mother-father is an indissoluble unit; one always implies the other and the way they interrelate or have interrelated.

„Needless to add that the transference phenomenon is not restricted to the analytic situation. It is to be found in all forms of idolization of authority figures in political, religious and social life“ (Fromm, 1962, p. 53). This does not exclude the fact that we frequently „transfer“ or „displace“ irrational fears and that we often feel vulnerable and helpless toward objects, other living beings, nature, and toward certain specific situations like heights and enclosed places that in an ultimate analysis are related albeit unconsciously to inadequate or painful experiences within our social group or in the midst of our family, but all are related to authority figures.

Fromm is quite specific about the ending of the transference: It is the search, the reaching out and becoming one with another human being. Paraphrasing f-level and Marx (Fromm, 1962, p. 57), man has to become distant and objective in order to distinguish between the world outside and himself and thus grasp the world and become one with it again. Man has to transcend his irrational relationship and his ties to people, other living beings, objects and situations, all of which is the aim of the process



of individuation. This theory has been beautifully represented by *The Ten Bulls of Kakuan* (Reps, 1957, p. 183): „I“ can become so much myself that I no longer need to affirm my „self.“ This is in clear reference to what Fromm stated in *Man for Himself* (1947): We cannot change our character orientation, but we can change the negative aspects of this character—or at least the most outstanding—thus reaching a meaningful level of our potential individuation in its creative and productive aspects, always within the limiting frame of our overall present reality. Isn't Freud a good example of this limiting frame of outer reality?

Fromm (1955, p. 47) gives an added clue to his concept of transcendence of the transference when he states that as we mature we become ever more independent of our mother and our father and „we become, as it were, our own father and our own mother, and we become also *our own child*,“ thus achieving our normal bisexuality as stated by Freud (1905, p. 143 footnote) and Fliess.

As Fromm wrote, if our dreams clarify our here and now, and this and our overall context clarifies our dreams, and in accord with Freud, our dreams are our „Royal Road“ to what is unconscious to us, it stands to reason that dreams *will clearly* reveal the state of the „*dream-day*“ transference. The manifest dream already begins to show how the dreamer experiences—though unconsciously still—living beings (persons, animals, plants), nature (water, fire, mountains), and what use and what significance he gives to diverse objects; it can portray many ways of socializing, or not at all; it points to the gender of those people important to him at that time or none are present signifying that they are at that time unimportant; with marked frequency the manifest dream seems rather incoherent and illogical; at other times the clarity and coherence with which it portrays events or people hint at the possibility of an insight, which though incipient and „in the dream,“ may be capable of becoming consolidated as a waking experience during the psychoanalytic dialogue.

Tauber and Green (1959) clearly show that dreams are not helpful in determining the character of people, which can only be determined by observing how they socialize and how they

relate to things (Fromm, 1947), but by-and-large the manifest dream reveals the unconscious relationship to significant beings of the dreamer's environment, which always includes the therapist, *whether or not he is present in the dream*. Quite often one can be the waking relationship to the analyst, and quite another what occurs in dreams—we must never lose sight of what this latter one reveals, for in our dreams we are free and candid. There is no question that if one dream can orient our therapy, the series of dreams mentioned during the therapeutic process are invaluable aids.

During psychoanalysis the dreamer must begin to experience the intimate global symbol of his dreams and retain consciousness of what had been unconscious to him; this process must go hand-in-hand with what he communicates in the dyad; otherwise the analytic procedure becomes a mere intellectual construct and the analyst remains aloof both from his dreams and their latent content as well as from what he could become aware of in his waking state.

I will relate some relevant dreams of A., a 40-year-old professional man employed in a family enterprise, and I shall condense the material of his 4 years in analysis.

He came because he was suffering an intense anxiety state. He told me he had tried to handle it himself for 2 months but had only succeeded in hiding his condition from the owners of the company and he hoped he had hidden it from his children. His intense anxiety was in evidence in tremors that shook his frame and in outbursts of weeping that would interrupt his communication; he apologized and said he had never cried before, but now he could neither control his trembling nor his tears. During the first 2-hour session we managed to clarify the precipitating event: A partner and relative in charge of the administrative branch of the family business had been jailed for income tax evasion.

The finding of the precipitating event did not of course explain the tears, but A. thus became interested in searching for the roots of his intense anxiety. I did not prescribe any medication. I only reaffirmed our need of finding the personal motivation for his crisis: He must ask himself what in his present and in his past could have provoked the outbreak. I told A. that I



would see him if his anxiety should become intolerable and I would prescribe medication if necessary. I asked him to write all the dreams of the night of our first session, or of the first night after this one, if he forgot his dreams that night; this was important so that we could catch a glimpse of his „inner world.“

I consider the dream or dreams of the first night after our first session to be very important as they furnish guidelines of inquiry and they provide a norm to contrast with later dreams, whether there is evidence of progression, regression, or of the analysis remaining static. Also, these dreams give a glimpse of the probable outcome of the transference and the severity of the case.

On the following 2-hour session a week later, A. told me he had been able to tolerate his anxiety with greater ease and he related a dream he had the night after we first met:

“I dreamt I was in my car and the landscape looked blurred; maybe it was in the countryside for I did not see houses. ... I was driving along a tortuous street, full of curves, downhill, and much as I tried to step on the power brake, the car would not stop, quite the contrary, it would accelerate a little more despite my putting my full weight (85 kilograms) on the brake. I was alone of course.”

I explained that the dream was a snapshot of him that night and I asked what the dream revealed about him. He became disconcerted and silent. I said it was strange that his overt anxiety while awake was absent from his dream. As he remained reticent I added that his dream *implied* fear, anxiety, perhaps even terror, powerlessness, perhaps some despair linked to a great loneliness and isolation from the outside world. Why is he all „alone of course“?

His resistances surged forth and he told me how successful he is, how happy he is at work and with his family, and he became very vocal; he denied feeling and being powerless; he gave me some biographical data to uphold his statements; he admitted to some everyday problems but nothing that would help us clarify the source of his intense anxiety. Toward the end of the second hour I told him I found all that he told

me rather strange, for nothing of what he said was in his dream; I said that I have no doubt that he believes he lives as he has told me and wishes to continue to believe it, but I hope he will give some thought to the sharp contradiction between what he has related and his manifest dream.

Little by little he became cognizant of his psychological impotence in confronting important events of his life; he married after graduating from the university and his honeymoon was quite disappointing, both sexually and emotionally. He wants daily sex and his wife rejects him; she loves to buy trinkets that are meaningless to him and it infuriates him. But he adds that otherwise their sex life is mutually gratifying. His wife continued her studies, graduated, and took a postgraduate course. Her academic life is full and she must take numerous trips alone, which A. resents. He allows her full initiative as to vacation sites and other outings and she is his intermediary with their daughters. He is usually quiet at home. He is resentful and indifferent, somewhat depressed and distant, „alone of course.“

He practiced his profession for 2 or 3 years after marriage, and then he entered his family's business; up to the time we met he felt abused and controlled there; he felt powerless in getting across his ideas, as he felt impotent to obtain a fair income and freedom of action. He never did anything about this situation nor did he cast off the yoke that oppressed him. His destiny dragged him on inexorably.

He never traveled alone on business trips. His enjoyments consisted of business dinners with abundant alcohol, although he always managed to drive home and arrive on his feet.

He has only one childhood friend; he lost the rest when he was 11 or 12, because he withdrew from them. He recalled an event when he was 8 years old and entered the only bathroom in the house and found his mother naked, standing facing him as he looked at her. „She was very beautiful then.“ She made no move to cover her nudity. The scene transpired in silence and finally he withdrew. From then on, he began to masturbate, evoking her image, until between the ages of 11 and 12 he thought that if there was a God, He would certainly strike him



dead for doing what he was doing. Nothing happened, so he decided there was no God. A. repressed several facts: (1) the total indifference of his mother at his presence—he was no one as far as she was concerned; (2) that she had not locked the door as usual, thus facilitating his intrusion; (3) as far as he experienced the event, it did not prove that there is no God. It proved that God did not care what he did, that God was entirely oblivious to him. How could he pray or call out to God in the dire moment of his dream's downhill destiny?

He became a loner and in the streets or on the beach he only looked at women's shoes or feet; he never gazed at their bodies, least of all breasts or groin. He enjoyed sex with his wife much more if she was totally naked and wore high-heeled slippers or shoes.

With me he was always courteous and interested but always distant; he was never annoyed and of course never angry. He was always punctual and called if he was going to be absent or tardy. On the rare occasion when I saw skepticism in his eyes, he would spontaneously voice his doubts. At times he arrived happy and gracious, with a fine sense of humor; on two or three of these occasions he was slightly tipsy. Usually he exteriorized a moderately depressive mood that he usually denied or blamed on being tired. Three years after beginning his analysis A. dreamt:

"My wife and I find ourselves in a youth hostel in England; it is a lodging place for young people 20 or 25 years old. We have a room for ourselves. We are advised that there will be a dinner-reception that evening to honor someone who turns out to be a Mr. Z—a colleague of my wife's who I dislike and I have no idea what he is doing over here—I'm not in our room but in one of the lounges of which there are several. Then I tell myself I must go and change and dress for dinner. The house and all the rooms are full ... the young people are drinking and chatting and suddenly I find myself naked. With some difficulty I reach my room after climbing the stairs—the house has two floors—I say with difficulty because the stairs are crowded and no one sees that I am naked. In our room there are

two women, one fully dressed and the other topless, with her breasts bare. They leave, giving me the opportunity to dress. I want to go into the bathroom next to our room, but I cannot urinate for it is full of men. I return to our room to finish dressing and after that I go to the room where dinner will be served and join my wife there. I must add that as the young woman with the bare breasts left our room, she grazed my chest with her nipples ... I did nothing."

The night before this dream, they went to a ceremony where Mr. Z. received a nomination; A. accompanied his wife with little grace and he added that he only went because the ceremony took place at night and she asked him to go. He agreed that he could have refused to go. He then related several trips to England but he never stayed at any youth hostels and never visited one. He is not sure he would like to attend a solemn British reception. His wife would love it and he repeats that his wife is the one who plans and maps out all their trips. At times he has „some sexual unrest“ but does nothing about it and goes no further into fantasies of any kind; he states that he never gets close to any woman, not even as a friend. He always remains aloof.

Finally I told him that it is unheard of that the only manifest objective in his dream is to dine and honor someone he dislikes, and in England of all places. He goes submissively into his wife's world, seemingly without any will or desire of his own and does nothing despite the obvious sexual provocation. He responded astounded, seemed to understand what I was communicating to him, and after some hesitation he falteringly remarked that he did not want to provoke any scandal because of his daughters.

I later added that I did not understand why his dream took place in a youth hostel in England, or why he was naked. I asked if the nudity was only to reinforce his idea that not even in the nude would anyone take notice of him. Was the incident related to his mother's nudity? I do not really know, and there are so many questions pending.

It becomes increasingly clear that his isola-



tion, aloofness, and distrust are primary mechanisms for his survival; his parents were indifferent toward him and his younger brother: his father in his business endeavors and his mother with her housework or with her women friends. They were totally oblivious to his wishes, his needs, or his rights. A. recalled his adolescence and how on Saturdays he and his brother would be left alone; they would go to the neighborhood cinema, later they'd buy something to dine at home, which they would eat in silence, and then he would go to his own room 'and listen to classical music. He has no recollection of ever having been taken seriously. He and his brother rarely merited punishment and both were good students. He expresses strong resentment toward his mother and all of his maternal relatives; but, at the present, he is particularly incensed against his father who shows progressive signs of incipient senility and has become iterative and forgetful.

He has begun to affirm himself at his place of work and has obtained recognition: He now has an equitable income, he is fully in charge of production, and he is important in all decision-making gatherings. He is very gifted, talented, and thoughtful.

One day he confessed his very frequent sadistic fantasies toward women: „I perform all sorts of overtures: I get them drunk; buy them high-heeled shoes; sometimes I tie them up, if they consent, and then I penetrate them furiously; at times it is a veritable rape. It shamed me to tell you all this; even when I dreamt about it, I wouldn't tell you.“ He now knows of his fear of women, fear that sets off his rancor and his fantasies of sadistic aggression, more so since he believes he is completely insignificant to them and they will impose their will on him. Could the automobile of his dream be his wife ... all women? It is quite probable.

It becomes clear that only under the influence of alcohol does he allow himself some sexual adventure and he only allowed himself a liaison of more than a year. The latter was a worker in the production line and he despised her; slowly we began to realize that she had always been warm, kind, loving, and generous and glad to share with him the time he offered. The rescue of this affection was rather important

for him, when he experienced the undeniable evidence of how much she cared for him and never demanded or expected more than he was willing to give. This revised unselfish experience with R. coincides with his gradual self-affirmation in his work. I can only point to the coincidence in time.

Four years of psychoanalysis have passed and there are significant changes in his way of life at work and some changes at home, where he asserts himself rather timidly yet rebelliously: He has told his wife that he does not agree to her frequent academic trips, that she is free to choose her way of life, but he is no longer disposed to accept her frequent absence. He begins to relate to his daughters and begins to find that each one is very much an individual and he is rather disconcerted by the fact that he tends to give time to one or the other, forgetting the rest of the family; his attempt to share with all of them is still feeble. He drinks much less in quantity and in frequency and ceases smoking for months at a time.

He is definitely the leader in the firm, which has stimulated his creative capabilities; he has slowly but surely begun necessary reorganizations. He feels fully confident and is thinking of branching out, but it requires caution and careful planning. He realizes he must learn to enjoy his leisure and to this end he enjoys reading, listening to music, playing the piano, and going for walks with his dog; he prefers to be alone. Recently he has become closer to his younger brother, whom he always watched over; he visits with him at least once a week or the two couples go out to dinner together. He enjoys being with him.

His last recent dream is: “I'm with my bitch playing with her; she's very loving and draws her head close to mine and I kiss the corner of her mouth, which struck me as odd for I'm not like that. I play quite a while with her. This is all I remember.”

He feels pity for his dog who is almost always alone and nobody plays with her, so she becomes very happy when she perceives he will take her for a walk; he is beginning to enjoy her loving, gentle demonstrations. I could say that



our relations have improved, but there is no evidence of this in his dreams. Will he be able to break his characteristic aloofness from other human beings? I hope so. His dreams suggest that he is able to love some form of life—his dog. For the time being he is no longer in a desperate situation, nor is he being dragged along to some event he dislikes, and he is no longer alone. Is the bitch his alter ego? It could be. He moves slowly, at his own good pace.

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