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THE DREAM WORLD

FROMM: *The Forgotten Language*. An Introduction to the Understanding of Dreams, Fairy Tales and Myths. Gollancz. 16s.

I strongly suspect Freud, with his dream theory, of being a regular *halluciné*." Thus, in 1909, wrote William James. "But I hope," he added, "that he and his disciples will push it to its limits, as undoubtedly it covers some facts and will add to our understanding of 'functional' psychology." The present-day reader may perhaps be led to wonder whether the disciples have not pushed the theory altogether beyond its limits. Certainly they have paid little heed to James's caution that "symbolism" is a dangerous method, and the author of the present work constitutes no exception. Symbolism proliferates unchecked through his pages and the possible existence of dangerous corners on what Freud called "the royal road to the Unconscious" is nowhere acknowledged. However regal the road which Dr. Fromm pursues, the reader may be pardoned an occasional doubt whether one who appears so very sure of his way is really the best guide to its murky terminus.

Dr. Fromm puts forward the thesis that the symbolic language of the dream is "... the one universal language the human race has ever developed, the same for all cultures and throughout history." This, to say the least, is a sweeping assertion and no very good evidence is adduced in its support. Although dreaming as such is undoubtedly universal, attempts to establish the existence of "universal" dream symbols have not hitherto met with conspicuous success. Further, Dr. Fromm invites us to share the curious view that "we are not only less reasonable and less decent in our dreams but ... we are also more intelligent, wiser and capable of better judgment when we are asleep than when we are awake." Surely this reflects a serious confusion regarding the nature of dream processes. As is well known, the analysis of dreams may provide valuable insight into character and conduct. Such insight, however, is gained only after the content of the dream has been subjected to some measure of

interpretation and its upshot accepted by the waking intelligence. The idea that any kind of mental activity associated with the depressed state of cerebral function characteristic of sleep can in itself be regarded as more "intelligent" than waking mental activity is, to say the least, too improbable to merit serious consideration. If the dreamer is wise, it can only be with the dubious wisdom of insanity.

Lastly, Dr. Fromm asserts that the psychological conditions governing myth and folklore are the same in principle as those governing phantasy and dream. Like the dream, he contends, "the myth ... offers a story occurring in space and time, which expresses, in symbolic language, religious and philosophical ideas, experiences of the soul in which the real significance of the myth lies." Deriving in his treatment from both Freud and Jung, he attempts an interpretation of a variety of myths ranging from Oedipus to Little Red Riding-Hood (here quaintly called Little Red-Cap). Although he has many interesting things to say, his analysis suffers from a naive belief in universal symbols coupled with a signal neglect of sociological issues. In consequence, the interpretations given are somewhat one-sided and strained. None the less, Dr. Fromm's excursion into social psychology is less limited than is usual among Freudian writers and his attempt to broaden the basis of psychological interpretation is far from unwelcome.

Apart from a tendency to hasty and sweeping generalization, which debars his work from any claim to scientific pretensions, Dr. Fromm writes of his subject with erudition and sympathy. His account of the history of dream interpretation and his comparative review of Freud and Jung will be of great value to amateurs of modern psychology. If William James would not wholly have approved of the liberties taken with scientific method, at least he would have welcomed this broad and human approach to the varieties of somnolent experience.