

Dreams Reflections of Inner Reality and Self-Awareness

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Dreams, even after decades of study, are nonetheless a wide mystery. To understand this concept, this research piles a range of studies surrounding the psychology of dreams narrowing in on how dreams reflect the inner reality of dreamers narrowing on attaining self-discovery. Essentially, this is a case study gandering and discussing various case studies on the importance of self-discovery and how that can be achieved through dreams with a general to narrow analysis of dreams. Dream formation outlines the REM sleep state and sleep stages. Sigmund Freud and a brief summary of his life are recapped by an in-depth familiarity with psychoanalysis—what it is, how it works, and what it does to dreams. Next, the understanding of how dreams reflect a human’s unconscious thoughts, feelings, and emotions is delineated. Following will be a link between self-discovery through dreams and how that ameliorates well-being, along with a discussion of the paper. Finally, the limitations of this research and future implications are traced.

Introduction

A dream, inside a dream, within a dream. As the climax of the award-winning movie *Inception*, the magical realm of dreams cascades every scientific reasoning and thought, overtaking the notion of reality. Leonardo DiCaprio's dialogue, “When we’re asleep, our mind can do almost anything” won the hearts of fans and non-fans alike, traversing over the planet’s palatinates, hoisting the faculty of the body’s own species: the mind (Nolan, 2010).

A highly sought-after theory on the notion of dreams is that it is brought upon by higher powers detailed by the notable neurologist Sigmund Freud himself (1901). Soon, however, as Freud's circumstances, this mythological reasoning ignited into psychology, and “dreams are a product of the dreamer’s own mind” (Freud, 1901, p. 633). Yet, with this, came the eruption of newfound questions on dreams such as how dreams originate, reflect mentality, their inconsistency, and their “transitory behavior” (Freud, 1901, p. 633). Freud further coins dreams as “the royal road to a knowledge of the unconscious activities of the mind” (Freud, 1987) which Michael Schredl interprets as the “expression of the person’s inner life” (Schredl, 2010). The essence of Freud’s and Schredl’s argument

lies in the concept of dreams as linked to the dreamer and their inner psychology.

This case study discusses the core of whether dreams reflect a dreamer's inner reality and personality. First, this paper clarifies the formation and development of the dream. Second, Sigmund Freud, the main contributor to the conceptual understanding of dreams, and his founding of psychoanalysis are documented. Next is the notion of lucid dreaming and remembering dreams. Then, the spectrum of knowledge on the reflection of one's inner personality through dreams is discussed. Finally, the significance and implication of self-discovery with the dream as the funnel towards self-discovery. The goal of this research is to encourage the understanding of one's self through their dreams.

Dream Formation

The discovery of the active state in human sleep erupted a new era of confusion. Electrographic recordings of an adult human sleeping leaked the shocking display of eye motility and concomitant phenomena (Aserinsky & Kleitman, 1953). Premature ideology was that sleeping was the human's state of unconsciousness until the discovery of the Rapid Eye Movement (REM) state, where the mind was active while sleeping urged the ongoing studying of dreams and sleep (Aserinsky & Kleitman, 1953). Aserinsky's and Kleitman's discovery of the rapid eye movement in sleep coined the term Rapid Eye Movement state, fathering the understanding of dreams. Dement and Kleitman (1957), years later, identified a pattern in the sleep of adult participants in their study: an eruption of body movement was displayed while the individuals were sleeping, appending to the sudden twist in the preconceived notion that sleeping was essentially another form of insensibility. Most people were capable of maintaining this sleep pattern daily (Dement & Kleitman, 1957).

REM sleep sets the beginning of the stage for the neurophysiological process of examining dreaming (Schredl, 2010). In the REM stage, the sleeper travels through various sleep stages and periods (Aserinsky & Kleitman, 1953). In essence, REM sleep is the state where dreams are formed. The REM sleep state occurs periodically throughout the night (Aserinsky & Kleitman, 1953) and brainwaves in the waking state or 'active' state are just as energetic as in the REM sleep (Schredl, 2010), blurring the lines between reality and dreams as the brain is unable to differentiate between them. Non-REM sleep or NREM sleep occurs in the first state of sleep and the next two stages of sleep are in charge of hypnotizing the dreamer into a state of deep sleep ("Sleep Basics", 2020). REM sleep is the stage generally after NREM sleep, adding together to finalize sleep through four main stages ("Sleep Basics", 2020). REM sleep is where dreams materialize ("Sleep Basics", 2020) and the brainwaves in this period compel dreams to appear realistically.

Sigmund Freud, The Father of Psychoanalysis

Sigmund Freud, born in 1856 in the Moravian town established as Freiburg, was the son of a Jewish, impecunious merchant as detailed in the introduction written by Peter Gay in 1966 in the *Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*, a book based on the series of lectures delivered by Freud in the wee years of 1915-1917. The turning point of his life began as he and his family made the escapade to Vienna due to the Nazi persecution in the late 1930s (Thurschwell, 2009). The landscape of Vienna blooming with liberal ideas emerged Freud's controversial topics on sexuality and unconscious desires (Thurschwell, 2009). An ingenious researcher, Freud cultivated an obsession with observing and scientific skepticism as commented by Gay (1989). With the inspiration of Jean-Martin Charcot, Freud molded an attraction to mental healing and desired to begin a study on it (Gay, 1989). In these years, the psychoanalytic theory was founded (Gay, 1989). His psychoanalytic concepts had an enormous backlash, inspiring Freud even further (Thurschwell, 2009). Despite the opponents, he had found supporters like Ernst Brücke, a professor in physiology, who aided Freud in furnishing deeper thoughts and ideas of unconsciousness and psychoanalysis (Thurschwell, 2009). He revolved the face of psychoanalysis with his renowned book, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, in 1900 gaining well-deserved support for his teachings, cascading newfound discoveries on the interest of psychology (Thurschwell, 2009).

One of his other successes, *Introductory Lectures to Psycho-Analysis*, was a collection of his original lectures presented at the University of Vienna between the years of 1915-1917. In this, Freud taught that psycho-analysis is an exclusively new form of medical treatment where the doctor listens to the patient's past and present feelings, thoughts, complaints, and wishes and “forces his attention in certain directions, gives him explanations and observes the reactions of understanding or rejection which he in this way provokes in him” (Freud, 1917, p. 20). Freud's unique belief in medical treatment grasped the threads of unconsciousness, in the logic that when treatment of the patient's consciousness proves difficult, medical doctors could rely on forging the patient's unconsciousness into shape.

Freud coined the term psychoanalysis as a psychological theory investigating the blurred gap between the conscious and unconscious (Freud, 1910/1925). This cascaded a new universe of understanding the human mind in terms of love, hate, family relationships, and similar complex emotions in day-to-day life (Thurschwell, 2009). Freud pressed that the “storehouse of conflicting energies and disguised desires [such as the aforementioned ones], is the individual's unconscious” and that every thought of the human mind is essentially “unconscious before it is conscious” (Thurschwell, 2009, p. 4). The concept of unconsciousness, in the logic of Freud reported by Thurschwell (2009), quarantines the subconscious desires and needs of the dreamer even when the conscious abandon them. An additional theory is a continuous conflict between the unconscious and the conscious, where the conscious suppresses the

unconscious via a process understood as repression (Thurschwell, 2009). Along with repression, concepts such as sublimation, hypnosis, and the interpretation of dreams rolled in. Psychoanalysis became key in the cognizance of dreams (Freud, 1910/1925). Dreams have also been operated as a medical treatment after Freud's theories (Schredl, 2010). In this way, dreams, through the vitality of the unconsciousness, propose the individual's desires and needs in a picturesque, realistic manifestation and continue to be the "royal road to the unconscious" in psychoanalysis (Whitman, 1963).

Reflection of Inner Personality Through Dreams

Dreaming is generated by a brain stem neuronal mechanism that can be shaped physiologically and mathematically (Hobson & McCarley, 1977). Some theories on dream theory include forebrain activity proposing dream mentation, the activation of the brain stem sensorimotor—a circuit or sensor with reticular, oculomotor, and vestibular neurons controlling electrical signals—pointing to dream imagery, and modifications in transmitter ratios accounting for dream amnesia (Hobson & McCarley, 1977). Hobson and McCarley (1977) conclude that forebrain activity corresponds to the brainstem circuits and memory information to construct dreams.

Shredl (1999) defines dreams as "the recollection of mental activity which has occurred during sleep" and advertises that most dreams, approximately 90%, had the dream ego and a state of mind similar to waking life (p. 12). Dreams have also been authenticated to display an effect on the dreamer's mood (Schredl, 1999). Calvin Hall (1953), years prior, piloted an experiment with approximately 10,000 dreams of distinct people concluding that dreams are an embodiment of an individual's entire personality and deal with their inner problems. The *Indian Journal of Psychiatry* pillared this argument by revealing that dreams picture the "inner and outer side of his being" and "his whole life and its development revealed in its honest sincerity" (Jung, 1965, p. 56). Murray Stein (2005), referencing Jung's "Memories, Dreams, and Reflections", completed the argument with an analysis of a woman that disclosed that "[h]er dreams also added important features to the picture of emergent selfhood" (p. 13).

Kalsched (1996) also added to Jung and Freud while concentrating on inner trauma, exposing the idea that when trauma hits a child, a part of the consciousness (splinter-psyches or complexes as Jung called them) reorganizes into archetypal patterns. A part of this ego regresses, meaning degrades to infantile, while the other part progresses or grows up quickly to become adapted to the outside world (Kalsched, 1996). The regressed part is symbolized as the child-like personality of the dreamer, commonly hidden from shame (Kalsched, 1996). Thus, the progressed part is presented in dreams (Kalsched, 1996). The recovery of repressed memories works as a form of treatment (Reiser, 2001). For example, a contemporary event, COVID-19, and the restrictive measures against it

can be labeled as traumatic for several people (Margherita et. al., 2021). Dreams intertwined into this by “replaying” those traumatic incidents of COVID-19 (Margherita et. al., 2021). Margherita and her colleagues (2021) undergo a study of dream content during the early stages of COVID-19. Results retained that the dreaming process does indeed integrate and process memories adding new contradictory information the lack of dream recall can be utilized to improve mental health (Margherita et. al. 2021).

In another book, Jung (1990/2010) honed out that “[o]nly when a dream is very impressive, or repeats itself often, do interpretation and conscious understanding become desirable (p. 476). An example of this was examined by Ernest L. Rossi (2008), who focused on an individual brought to his therapy session. The woman was in a critical stage where her dreams and visions repeatedly haunted her (Rossi, 2008). She was able to recall her dreams vividly and Rossi (2008) specified this as a talent. However, dream reality was declared to have numerous levels and it was implied that “there are inner realities other than the mind and its dream world” (Hamilton, 2018, p. 166). In explanation of this, Frederick Eeden (1913), while dissecting his dreams, responded with various levels of dreams such as the initial dream with hypnagogic hallucinations, a pathological dream (fever, indigestion, and poison appeared in his dream), ordinary dreaming, vivid dreaming which with their clarity affect the abnormal body condition, symbolic dreams that are mocking, dream-sensations (being occupied with one thought), lucid dreams, demon-dreams (base off of lucid dreaming but with non-humans), and wrong waking up where the dreamer believed they have woken up but are still grasped in the dream. In this way, nine levels of dreams sustained Rossi’s views. Arguing against current research, Frederick van Eeden (1913) reserved his convictions that the conditions of the body did not impact dreams, colliding with the cascade of previous researchers asserting that dreams are influenced by the inner world of a being. In any case, Eeden might be referring to the physical body rather than the inner realm which *would* follow along with researchers during that time, although that distinction was not made clear. One of the dreams analyzed by Freud (1995), about a woman, symbolized as an inn, was judged as a dream referencing the dreamer’s childhood.

While childhood and trauma can be recurring themes for dreams, other psychologists debate against them. Some dreams even aid in commencing a creative solution to problems (Hall, 1953). Dr. Hal and Dr. Sidra Stone, illustrate dreams as a new thought or perspective in life while simultaneously grounding familial relationships and self-discovery. “[D]reams give us the most direct experience of this deeper intelligence” (para. 6) and employ “remarkable friends” who give an “objective, or unbiased, picture” of the dreamer (para. 7). Common themes are also articulated: high places, fast cars or freeways, quicksand or sticky asphalt, school or military service, police officers, houses, (Stone & Stone). In this

way, Rossi's argument on dream levels is supported and contrasted at the same time. While Hal and Sidra Stone debate different themes, they sustain Rossi's base argument of dreams having levels.

Dreams even impel the dreamer toward their goals and ambitions by powering up their emotions for it (Adler, 1936). Similar to *Inception* where the seed of the idea planted in the dream erupted into maturing in the dreamer's mind and unwinding as reality. When an individual responds courageously to a problem, the individual dreams less, yet the lack of these dreams dissolves creativity and imagination (Adler, 1936).

Virtually overall, the consensus that dreams reflect the inner realm of human beings is heavily supported by centuries of research and a myriad of psychologists and scientists.

Dreams and Self-Awareness

Like dreams incorporate the inner realm or subconscious, they present a sense of self-discovery to the dreamer. "Self-discovery makes possible an understanding of the infinite possibilities and scope of both self and life" (Kick, 2004, p. 46) while reconstructing self-discovery of the subconscious. Self and life are simultaneous as understanding one of them benefits apprehending the other and vice versa (Kick, 2004).

As REM sleep influences the dreamer and their brain activity, dreams induce self-discovery (Voss et. al., 2014). This self-discovery or self-awareness aims to encourage self-knowledge, making improvements, accommodating weaknesses, and accepting oneself (Steiner, 2014). Without self-awareness, self-deception flares leading to a misconception of the individual (Steiner, 2014). This is currently a problem in contemporary society: the lack of self-awareness in return, compounding self-deception (Steiner, 2014). Leadership performance is nailed to have a positive correlation with the level of self-awareness of an individual, winding up that self-awareness is paramount in work and career (Bratton et. al., 2011).

A cousin of self-awareness, self-reflection, and the process ongoing though it is a form of problem-solving (Morin, 2011). Self-reflection and self-awareness succor in the healing from trauma and psychosomatic scars (Ardelt, 2018). Dreams, as aforementioned latch onto trauma, and reflection and awareness of these wounds, as Ardel pronounced, aid with the recovery of the scars. Self-awareness, also known as "autonoetic (self-knowing) consciousness, has been linked to theory of mind, meta-cognition, episodic autobiographical memory, and the continuity of the self from the past into the future" (Stuss, et. al., 2005, p. 50). All in all, self-understanding is knotted with clear perks for oneself.

Self-awareness, self-discovery, self-attention, and self-reflection can be clinched by understanding one's dreams. Symbols and themes climbing in dreams bespeak the dreamer's weaknesses, goals, fears, and subconsciousness are claimed by the dreams. Accepting, finding, focusing on oneself, and reflecting on these themes of dreams shepherds to

overcoming weaknesses and fears, achieving goals, and forwarding subconscious feelings and thoughts to the consciousness. In the consciousness, the dreamer can seek their true feelings and thoughts and claim their candid personality in the absence of the risk of self-deception.

Discussion

The fact that dreams reminisce the inner realm and the dreamer's subconscious is hitherto ingrained in the psychological field of dreams. The core of this paper is to encourage the dreamer to pursue in cognizing these dreams and securing self-discovery. The paper pushes for self-discovery as vital for overall well-being, conception, and perspective on life.

First, the process of dream formation was articulated with a focus on REM sleep and the conscious, unconscious, and subconscious of all actors in dreams. Second, Sigmund Freud and his game-changing approaches to psychoanalysis, the underlying base of dreams, were ventilated. The conceptual familiarity with this concept permitted a smooth transition into an inner personality arrayed in dreams arguing the high dependence of dreams on the dreamer's memories, subconsciousness, and inner realm. The importance of self-discovery is finally weighed, concluding its ability to sustain blessings to the individual and their life. With these two certitudes evidenced by highly educated researchers and psychologists, the dissociation is meant to be cleared with this paper by linking the concepts of inner reality and self-discovery with their shared, common theme of dreams.

Limitations and Future Directions

The lack of experiments or tests conducted, in its nuance, does indeed degrade the cogency of this research paper in conveying its intended message. Further, many of the theories discussed prove difficult to develop a decisive conclusion as they are, at the core, ideas fragmented by trends and connections. Experimenting with a myriad of participants willing to sacrifice their dreams would drastically build confidence in providing new developments to the face of dreams and psychoanalysis. In that sense, the absence of an experiment will simply add to the purpose of the paper but will not degrade the paper's fulfillment of eclectic and diverse studies of credible researchers and scientists who have accomplished their share of successful experiments. In essence, this paper is meant to rouse the investigation of dreams to decipher their blurred spots, proffering the wisdom of it to the common public all whilst fostering the vision of self-discovery via apprehending the individual's dreams and unconscious behavior.

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