Chapter IV. THE UNCONSCIOUS

When the International Psychoanalytical Association was founded in 1910, the goals of the Association were declared to be to:

...foster and further the science of psychoanalysis founded by Freud, both as a pure discipline of psychology and in its application to medicine and the mental sciences...30

The "pure discipline of psychology" which Freud had in mind, and which may be called the first psychoanalytic system, rested on three bases. These were: the unconscious, the libido theory, and transference and resistance as the basis of psychotherapy. The major works of Freud in which these concepts were developed were published between 1900 and 1914, although in a number of cases various additions were made afterward.

The unconscious was always for Freud one of the major pillars of psychoanalytic psychology. In every one of his popular presentations of psychoanalysis, which were quite numerous, he devoted most space to a delineation of the unconscious. If he had to refer to psychoanalysis briefly, he would call it the psychology of the unconscious or the psychology of the depths. Much of the opposition to psychoanalysis he attributed to its discovery of the unconscious and the consequent blow to man's fond narcissistic belief that he is in complete control of himself.

It is vital to understand that the unconscious is a concept which provides a theoretical framework that ties together a number of clinical observations. It is not an anatomical concept; as Freud noted over and over again, it has no anatomical locale. It is not reified, that is, it is not transformed into some entity with an
independent existence. The unconscious is merely shorthand for
"unconscious mental processes."

Furthermore, as a theory designed to explain the observed facts, it left Freud somewhat dissatisfied, and he was always preoccupied with the wish to make it much more consistent. In other words, it is a first approximation, although actually Freud's work on the unconscious was so thoroughly done that nothing of any fundamental importance has since been added. His own view was summed up in the paper on "The Unconscious" in 1915, in which he wrote:

Study of the derivatives of the unconscious will completely disappoint our expectations of a schematically clear-cut distinction between the two psychical systems. This will no doubt give rise to dissatisfaction with our results and will probably be used to cast doubts on the value of the way in which we have divided up the psychical processes. Our answer is, however, that we have no other aim but that of translating into theory the results of observation, and we deny that there is any obligation on us to achieve at our first attempt a well-rounded theory which will commend itself by its simplicity. We shall defend the complications of our theory so long as we find that they meet the results of observation, and we shall not abandon our expectations of being led in the end by those very complications to the discovery of a state of affairs which, while simple in itself, can account for all the complications of reality.

To some extent the unconscious always played a role in the history of psychology. L. L. Whyte has recently summarized the pre-Freudian literature. Herbart, one of the dominant figures in German psychology, in the nineteenth century, actually used terms such as "unconscious" and "repressed" which were identical with Freud's terms, and it has been shown that Freud was exposed to textbooks of psychology written along Herbartian lines. Freud himself made a number of references to one of the leading German psychologists of his day, Theodor Lipps, who insisted that the unconscious was the real problem of psychology. The famous English psychologist, Francis Galton, had written a passage in 1880 that sounds almost like Freud:

Associated ideas lay bare the foundations of men's thoughts... with more vividness and truth than he would probably care to publish to the world... and the valid reason, therefore, to our believing in the existence of still deeper strata of mental operations, sunk wholly below the level of consciousness, which may account for such mental phenomena as cannot otherwise be explained.

Nevertheless, it must not be supposed that the historical antecedents explain Freud's revolutionary use of the concepts. The same holds true of the unconscious as of other pathbreaking steps in the history of ideas, such as evolution or relativity: While there are many predecessors, it remains for some profound mind to come along and show how the concept can really be applied to the data at hand. This is Freud's real contribution. He made the unconscious a working tool for the psychologist, instead of a speculative device, as it had been in the past. Thereby he opened up a whole new world for psychological investigation.

Freud's early observations of the 1890's were deepened by his own self-analysis, which led to The Interpretation of Dreams (1900). Some further additions were made in The Psychopathology of Everyday Life (1904) and in the paper (1915) "The Unconscious." These three works summarize Freud's thinking on the unconscious.

Actually Freud's theory of the unconscious is relatively simple. It examines both the conscious and the unconscious, and considers the shifting balance between the two types of mental processes.

In order to understand a mental process in all its aspects one takes the metapsychological point of view. This metapsychological point of view embodies topographic, dynamic, and economic aspects.

The topographic aspect distinguishes three components of a mental process: the unconscious, the preconscious, and the conscious, commonly abbreviated as Ucs, Pcs, and Cs. The dynamic aspect presupposes that mental phenomena are looked upon as being the result of the interaction and counteraction of forces.

The economic aspect leads to the attempt to ascertain the fate of given volumes of excitation. It considers the quantitative element. It is an outgrowth of the concept of bound and unbound energy which stemmed from Freud's Breuer period.

When excitation is concentrated either positively or negatively in any given direction or area there results a "cathexis"; in other words, a cathected object is one that is either desired or feared. The term "cathexis" is a somewhat clumsy one; it was especially coined
by Brill for his English translation of Freud. "Emotional charge" would have been a simpler form. However, "cathexis" is by now widely used and well understood.

The kernel of the unconscious consists of instinct presentations, the aim of which is to discharge their cathexis. They are wishes or impulses. In the processes belonging to the unconscious are to be found exemption from mutual contradiction, timelessness, the substitution of psychic for external reality, and domination by the primary process.

In other words, the unconscious consists of a variety of wishes which press for discharge. These wishes originally stem from instinctual needs but may develop far beyond them. It is only when such wishes are discharged, in one form or another, either in phantasies, in dreams, in neurotic symptoms, or in overt active behavior of one kind or another, that the unconscious becomes known. Otherwise it acts silently and completely beyond the awareness of the observer.

The primary process is that which reigns in the unconscious. Study of the primary process reveals a type of mental functioning that is radically different from ordinary rational thinking. Its chief characteristic is the striving for immediate discharge. The whole stress is laid upon making the cathecting energy mobile and capable of discharge; the content and the proper meaning of the psychical elements to which the cathexes are attached are treated as of little consequence. The primary process seeks release above all, and thus helps to account for those phenomena that come out involuntarily or unconsciously.

The two major devices of the primary process are condensation and displacement. In condensation one idea comes to stand for a great many, much as symbols do in works of art. In displacement, ideas or feelings are shifted to some entirely different area which may have no intrinsic relation to it. Condensation and displacement help to explain why the unconscious is so unintelligible; conversely, by understanding these processes one can make the unconscious intelligible.

Contrasted to the primary process is the secondary process which is ordinary rational thinking. However, it adds the idea that rational thinking serves the purpose of handling the impulses that emanate from the primary process. While the primary process seeks for discharge, the secondary process attempts to inhibit the discharge and to transform the cathexis into a quiescent one or to stabilize it.

From this point of view consciousness functions as a sense organ which selects the material from the unconscious which does not arouse too much anxiety in the individual, and which rejects those impulses which do arouse too much anxiety. Nevertheless our consciousness acts as a very imperfect sense organ, and frequently the unconscious breaks through into consciousness even though such a break-through is not desired. This is the phenomenon which Freud called "the return of the repressed." Just why repressed material should be repressed most of the time and return at others becomes a ticklish theoretical question, yet this phenomenon is something that a great many clinical observations help to explain.

The theory of the unconscious includes a number of important findings:

The Motives for Repression

Repression is a protective process that wards off unpleasant experiences for the individual. It is part of the earliest observation that Freud made, namely, that neurosis involves a defense against unbearable ideas. The enlargement of the concept involves the recognition that repression is not confined to neurosis but is found in all human beings. Repression is tied up with the pleasure principle, which, in general, all psychologists have seen to be the basis of biological strivings; man, like other animals, is an organism that searches for pleasure. The pleasurable desires are called wishes; the unpleasurable ones are called fears. Repression maintains the balance in the individual; by its means he helps himself to seek pleasure and to avoid pain.

Manifestations of the Unconscious

With the realization that dreams are an expression of unconscious wishes, Freud arrived at a new and deeper understanding of the unconscious. Henceforth he liked to refer to psychoanalysis as the
psychology of the depths, by which is meant that the unconscious penetrates to the deepest layers of the personality and is far more extensive than anybody had hitherto realized.

The first manifestations of the unconscious were observed in hypnosis. In the hypnotic situation, the subject can be given a suggestion to carry out after he comes out of the hypnotic trance. If he is also told that he will forget what happened during hypnosis, he will do so and will carry out the suggestion, even though he has no idea of why he is acting in this way, and even though the action may be totally inappropriate to the circumstances. This is known as "posthypnotic suggestion" and "posthypnotic amnesia." Here the unconscious is, so to speak, demonstrated experimentally.

The next area in which unconscious manifestations were recognized by Freud was neurosis. In psychotherapy free associations were seen as an avenue to the unconscious. These phenomena are confined primarily to therapeutic or clinical situations. When Freud turned to dreams, however, he came squarely to grips with normal psychology, since everybody dreams, and people have always dreamed everywhere and in all ages. Thus his work on dreams represented for Freud a transition from psychotherapy to normal psychology.

After dreams, Freud turned to two subjects which were totally foreign to the neurological and psychiatric thinking of his day, just as dreams had been. In 1904 he wrote The Psychopathology of Everyday Life; the next year he wrote a book about jokes and the unconscious. By the psychopathology of everyday life he meant the various slips of the tongue, errors of omission and commission, symptomatic actions, failures to carry out actions, and all other minor slips and mistakes which may perhaps be best summed up by the term Freudian slips. Freud's thesis is really that any slip is to be taken seriously. If, for example, a man should forget to come to his own wedding, everybody would assume that he is in the grip of some fear of getting married. Freud extended this thinking to all kinds of slips; even apparently minor lapses, such as losing a letter or misplacing a book, may be unconsciously determined. The need for gratification and wish-fulfillment, which is the basis of all mental life, breaks through.

That jokes can have intense meaning to the individual is a proposition that many can readily agree with, once it is pointed out. Freud's contribution here, apart from the technical means of discovering the mechanisms of jokes, is once again that the individual is in the grip of psychic conflicts which need discharge, and that the joke serves as a discharge phenomenon.

At about the same time that he wrote about jokes Freud also began to investigate the matter of artistic production. As early as 1904 he wrote a paper, "Psychopathic Characters on the Stage," which embodies many of the essential ideas in the psychoanalytic interpretation of art. In the theatrical performance both the performer and the audience find some gratification for their neurotic needs. The needs which are gratified are unconscious in nature; were they to become conscious, the attraction of the artistic performance both for the performer and for the audience would be lost.

And so the horizons continued to be broadened. In 1907 Freud wrote a paper about obsessional acts and religious practices, in which he called attention to the close similarity between the two. He showed that religion, too, is motivated by unconscious forces.

By this time he had begun to have some followers, and several of them, particularly Otto Rank and Hanns Sachs, did some essential work in the application of psychoanalysis to mythology and the social sciences. In 1912 Freud published his classic application to other societies of psychoanalytic thinking, Totem and Taboo, in which he demonstrated that the unconscious processes which are found in one form of society are not really dissimilar from those found in others. There are certain basic conflicts that are common to all human beings in all societies.

Still later some of his followers were able to apply the theory of the unconscious not merely to slips in everyday behavior but also to ordinary everyday behavior, such as the way a person walks, talks, dresses, and so on. They were able to show that everything has or can have an unconscious aspect to it.

Among the aspects of human living in which manifestations of the unconscious can be found are: hypnosis, neurotic symptoms, free associations, daydreams, dreams, slips of everyday life, jokes, art, religion, mythology, other societies, and behavior in general.
In other words, the unconscious is applicable to every area of human existence. This fact explains the claim that psychoanalysis can become the basis of a general psychology.

The Unconscious and Infantile Sexuality

The contents of the unconscious are related to the stages of psychosexual development. It is to be borne in mind that all elements of the Freudian theory are interconnected with one another; each reinforces the other, so that it is not possible to take one in isolation and consider it as a disconnected entity. If one part of the theory is dropped then the explanation that Freud gave for some other part must be replaced. If, for example, the existence of a primary process is questioned, then it will be necessary to find some other way to explain dreams, since the primary process fits in most neatly with the nature of dreaming. Again, if the theory of the unconscious is dropped or questioned, then some alternative to Freud's explanation will have to be offered. At a later stage Freud demonstrated the central similarity of dreams, neurotic symptoms, schizophrenic delusions, and productions of primitive peoples.

The Contents of the Unconscious. With its dependence on the theory of instinct, the subject of the contents of the unconscious remained for Freud the most uncertain part of his system, and has offered the greatest room for controversy among other psychoanalysts. Freud himself changed his theories about the contents of the unconscious in two vital respects. In 1917 he formalized the concept of the introject in his paper, "Mourning and Melancholia." From this time on not only feelings and ideas could be unconscious but people as well; that is, there can be an unconscious image of another person, essentially the unconscious image of the mother and the father. In 1920 Freud revised his theory of the instincts and introduced the dual theory, with its concept of a life wish and a death instinct with its attendant instinctual aggression; this dual theory again altered his view of the development of sexuality. Both of these changes belong to the period of ego psychology and will be discussed more fully (see Chapter XI).

Freud not only produced a theory of the unconscious; he also had a method for working with the unconscious, which is as important as the theory, since without such a method the unconscious would remain on a theoretical level that would make it inaccessible. Freud's method derives from the various manifestations of the unconscious. Since the primary process is ordinarily concealed by man's rational everyday thoughts, it is only when this rational mask is either removed or reduced to a minimum that the unconscious becomes manifest. One point at which everybody is deprived of the protection of his rationalizations is during sleep; hence Freud referred to dreams as the royal road to the unconscious. In general, fantasies are closer to unconscious needs than are everyday activities. In psychology proper these fantasies can be elicited and studied by means of what are called the projective techniques.

Even though the interpretation of the unconscious may in a general way be the same among different observers, in specific instances one is certain to find a good deal of disagreement. It is a cardinal principle of Freud's doctrine that unconscious material can be understood only when the associations of the individual are provided, so that a chain can be formed from the particular production to its unconscious origin. Such associations are most freely obtainable in the psychoanalytic treatment situation. Otherwise they can be reached only with difficulty, and the interpretation of the unconscious meaning of any particular fantasy or act is frequently open to much question.

The idea of an unconscious mind was fought with the most incredible arguments by Freud's colleagues. As he later came to realize, he had dealt the world a severe blow; in effect what he said to men was that they were not really masters in their own house. All of a sudden, the façade behind which they assure themselves that they are aware of all their motives collapsed, and it is understandable that such a shock should be ardently fought. In the course of time the essentially common-sense character of Freud's doctrine has come to be increasingly recognized, and today there is scarcely any school of psychology dealing with personality that does not accept the unconscious in one form or another. Differences naturally arise in the interpretation of unconscious material, but these are differences in detail rather than in the over-all conception.
Schools of thought which do not recognize the unconscious have proved to be almost totally sterile in their approach to human personality, and sooner or later have fallen back heavily upon psychoanalytic concepts.

THE INTERPRETATION OF DREAMS

The work in which his theory of the unconscious was first clearly formulated by Freud was The Interpretation of Dreams. This is universally regarded as Freud's greatest work. It is indeed a monumental achievement, since at one stroke it resolves the problem of the dream and formulates the theory of the unconscious. Both of Freud's achievements in this book have stood the test of time. They still form the basis of today's psychoanalytic psychology. The book can rightly be regarded as one of the classics of all scientific literature.

The book was published on November 4, 1899, but the publisher chose to put the date 1900 on the title page. Initially the book was almost completely ignored by the profession and by the lay public. Six hundred copies were printed; it took eight years to sell them. In the first six weeks after publication 123 copies were sold; in the next two years, 228. Then, as interest in psychoanalysis grew, new editions and revisions were called for. This was one of the two books (the other was Three Essays on Sexuality) that Freud continued to revise and keep up to date throughout his life. During his lifetime there were eight editions in all, the last in 1929. In the later editions no fundamental changes were needed. The most important addition contained a theory of symbolism in which Freud gave full credit to Stekel's stimulating ideas.

Usually modest and self-effacing in relation to his achievements, Freud made an exception of this book and was unusually proud of it. In a special preface to the English edition of 1932 he wrote:

This book, with the new contribution to psychology which surprised the world when it was published [1900], remains essentially unaltered. It contains, even according to my present-day judgment, the most valuable of all the discoveries it has been my good fortune to make. Insight such as this falls to one's lot but once in a lifetime.

On the very first page of the book Freud sets forth a statement which can only be regarded as a sharp challenge to the contemporary neurologists and psychologists of his day:

Anyone who has failed to explain the origin of dream images can scarcely hope to understand phobias, obsessions, or delusions, or to bring a therapeutic influence to bear on them.

Inasmuch as no one else at that time understood dreams at all or paid the slightest attention to them, Freud was obviously saying that his colleagues were all misinformed and incapable of treating neurotic problems adequately. Such a provocative position was rarely taken by Freud and it shows again how certain he was of the fundamental and revolutionary character of this work.

The first chapter reviews the previous literature as it had come down through the ages. As Freud later said, nothing except a single isolated remark of Fechner's was of any value. And, indeed, in any scientific discussion of the dream today it is customary to begin with Freud and to discard everything that had gone before.

In Chapter II, entitled "The Analysis of a Specimen Dream," Freud's novel technique for interpreting dreams is first elucidated by means of an illustration, using a dream of his own. In order to understand a dream the dreamer's associations are needed, and if these are not forthcoming it is in general not possible to understand what the dreamer is trying to say. Exceptions to this rule occur only for those dreams which employ primarily symbolism, or which are so-called "typical dreams," that is, dreams that occur in the same form to a great many people.

Novel ideas have a way of looking astoundingly simple once they have been pointed out, and yet of being totally obscure before they are pointed out. Freud rightly stated that his technique of getting associations to the dream elements was the really revolutionary contribution in his conception of the dream and its interpretation. This idea, of course, is also part of the larger theory of interpreting unconscious material which in general cannot be understood without the associations of the individual.

The associations lead back to the hidden material, which at bottom expresses a wish. Thus in this chapter there are already
presented the essentials of Freud's theory of the dream, namely that the dream is a disguised way of gratifying a wish, and that its meaning can be unraveled by paying close attention to the associations of the dreamer.

In Chapter III, "A Dream is the Fulfillment of a Wish," Freud elaborates this latter point more fully. It has often been supposed that, in his opinion, the only wishes that occurred in dreams were of a sexual nature. Freud does hold that most dreams embody sexual wishes, but he goes to great lengths to deny the idea that all of them do. Thus he writes:

The more one is concerned with the solution of dreams, the more one is driven to recognize that the majority of the dreams of adults deal with sexual material and give expression to erotic wishes. At the same time, on the very next page he is constrained to declare:

The assertion that all dreams require a sexual interpretation, against which critics rage so incessantly, occurs nowhere in my Interpretation of Dreams. It is not to be found in any of the numerous editions of this book and is an obvious contradiction to other views expressed in it.

If a dream involves a disguised expression of wishes, this requires further investigation. Such further investigation is the subject of Chapter IV, "Distortion in Dreams." Here Freud makes his fundamental distinction between the manifest and the latent content of a dream. The manifest content is the dream as it appears to the dreamer, the latent content is the dream as it is ultimately unraveled through the series of associations. In this contrast between the manifest and the latent content is seen the interplay of two forces, the wish which is striving to break through into consciousness and the censorship which seeks to restrain this wish from doing so. It is to be noted that this contrast is an elaboration of Freud's first fundamental hypothesis about neurosis involving a defense against unbearable ideas. The censor is a term for the psychic agency which determines whether certain material breaks through to consciousness. In the later period of ego psychology the concept was abandoned; the term is no longer used today.

If a dream is the expression of a wish, a natural objection arises: How is a dream with a distressing content possible? To this the basic answer is that a dream distortion has occurred, and that the distressing content serves merely to disguise something that is wished for. This may arise in one of two ways. First, the person may be a masochistic individual and may be seeking to gratify masochistic or self-punishing wishes. Second, in anxiety dreams the anxiety is a transformation of repressed libido. (See above, pages 16-17.) In other words, every fear covers up some disguised wish. Through the anxiety-dream the individual is able at least to express the libidinal desire and to derive some gratification in that way.

In Chapter V, "The Material and Sources of Dreams," Freud analyzes the material and the sources of dreams. He considers recent and indifferent material in dreams, infantile material as a source of dreams, the somatic sources of dreams, and typical dreams. The essential points in this chapter are the following:

First of all, there are no indifferent dreams. "We do not allow our sleep to be disturbed by trifles." If the material in the dream seems to be of a trivial or indifferent nature, that is part of the disguise process. Furthermore, there is always a point of contact with the previous day; that is, the dream is triggered off by something that happened within the past twenty-four hours. This stimulus is known as the day residue. Though seemingly trivial, upon analysis the day residue always turns out to be connected with something that is vitally significant to the individual. If the analysis is pushed far enough, it is invariably found that the dream attaches itself to childhood experiences. A dream is a piece of infantile mental life that has been superseded. Thus every dream in its manifest content is linked with recent experiences and in its latent content with the earliest experiences.

The usual nonpsychoanalytic assumption is that if dreams have any source at all, they come from somatic stimulation during sleep. For example, it is frequently held that if a person dreams of water it is because he has an urge to urinate. Against such an interpretation Freud raised the irrefutable argument that the same stimulus may be interpreted in any number of different ways by different people and in any number of different ways by the same person at different
times during his life. Since Freud’s time, this statement has been experimentally confirmed, and can be confirmed over and over again by anyone who wishes to take the trouble. Freud concluded that sensations during sleep play the same role as recent and indifferent material—they trigger off the dream which essentially derives from deeper sources in the unconscious.

In the last section of Chapter V Freud considers a number of typical dreams, such as the dream of being naked in a street, dreams of taking an examination, dreams of the death of a near relative toward whom one has consciously nothing but love feelings, etc. Such dreams Freud considers an exception to the general rule that associations have to be obtained in order to understand the meaning of dreams. Since these typical dreams are so similar in a variety of different people, they bring out deeply buried wishes which are otherwise concealed. For example, the dream of being naked brings out the exhibitionistic wish, while the dream of the death of a loved one brings out the concealed hostile feelings toward that person.

Chapter VI, “The Dream Work,” is the longest chapter in the book. Inasmuch as there is both a latent and a manifest content in dreams, there must be some process by which the latent content is transformed into the manifest content. For this process Freud coined the term dream work, and proceeded to describe it in the greatest of detail. Inasmuch as the dream has to evade the censorship, the dream work makes use above all of extensive displacements which conceal the true meaning of the material. The thoughts have to be reproduced exclusively or predominantly in the material of visual or acoustical memory traces (primarily visual); this imposes upon the dream work considerations of representability which it meets by carrying out fresh displacements. This accounts for the fact that dreams are always dreamed in imagery; thus nobody ever dreams of justice in the abstract, but a person may dream of a judge handing down a decision. Extensive condensation of the dream material occurs, so that one symbol in a dream may have many different meanings. This is the principle of overdetermination which applies to all unconscious functioning. In general, little attention is paid to the logical relation of thoughts in dreams; those relations are ultimately given a disguised representation in certain formal characteristics in dreams. Any feeling or affect attached to the dream-thoughts undergoes less modification than their ideational content. Such affects are, as a rule, repressed; when they are retained they are detached from the ideas that properly belong to them. The dream work is cast into a form which is acceptable to consciousness by means of the process of secondary revision or secondary elaboration. This process, which is essentially the same as the thought process in waking life, is the only aspect of dreams which had been given any attention by writers before Freud.

Chapter VII, “Psychology of the Dream Processes,” is the theoretical heart of the book, and sums up all the previous arguments. In this chapter Freud asks: In the light of what has been uncovered of the nature of dreams, what kind of a mental structure can we postulate to account for the phenomena? Emphasis is placed upon the ability of the theory to account for the observations, an ability which shifts it from the sphere of speculation to that of science.

After some brief preliminary remarks pointing to the complexity of the task, the chapter is divided into a number of sections:

The Forgetting of Dreams: How does one know whether dreams are accurately remembered or not? As with memory in general, one does not know. But experience shows that the extent of forgetting is as a rule overestimated. The principle that psychic events are determined makes it certain that what is remembered is meaningful, provided one knows how to extract the meaning from it.

In analysis, forgetting serves the purpose of resistance. Similarly, in dreams to explain forgetting there is reference to the power of the censorship.

In the light of the censorship and the resistance to which it points, the question arises: How is a dream possible at all? The answer is that the state of sleep reduces the power of censorship.

Regression. The most striking psychological characteristic of the dream is that a thought is objectified. Two features stand out: 1. Thought is represented as an immediate situation with the “perhaps” omitted; and 2. Thought is transformed into visual images and speech. In respect to the first point dreams and daydreams are similar; in respect to the second, they are not.
Fechner had suggested that dreams take place in a different psychic locality; this view, which Freud adopts, has nothing anatomical about it. In general, psychic processes advance from the perceptual to the motor end; this is the familiar reflex arc concept. A system in front of the apparatus receives perceptual stimuli but retains no trace of them and thus has no memory, while behind it lies a second system which transforms momentary excitations into permanent traces. Further considerations of this kind led Freud to describe the division of the mind into conscious (Cs), preconscious (Pcs) and unconscious (Ucs).

In the diagram, the left side is the perceptual end, the right side the motor end. Mem = memory. The diagram is to be read as follows: Percepts lead to memories or permanent traces, which are unconscious. The unconscious is accessible to consciousness only through the preconscious; the unconscious cannot become conscious directly. The path from the preconscious in the diagram is the road to consciousness, which must fulfill certain conditions. The perceptual end is, of course, also conscious.

Within this structure Freud then asks: Where is the impetus to the construction of dreams to be found? The answer is: In the unconscious.

In dreams the excitation moves in a backward direction. Instead of going from percept to motor activity, it goes from motor activity toward the sensory end and finally results in a perception. This backward movement is "regressive." It is regression because in a dream: an idea is turned back into the sensory image from which it was originally derived.

What modification makes possible in the dream a regression which cannot occur in the waking state? The first explanation is that during the waking state there is a current from the perceptual end to the motor end, in the progressive direction. This current stops during sleep and hence facilitates the reverse, or regressive direction.

But the foregoing does not explain pathological regressions in waking states—hallucinations and visions. These turn out to be linked with repressed memories which break through in such states. This suggests that in dreams too the transformation of thoughts into visual images results from memories. Hence arises the view that the dream is a substitute for an infantile scene modified by transference to recent material. The infantile memory cannot be revived directly, and must therefore be satisfied to return as a dream. Thus dreaming is a regression to childhood, a revival of the instinctual impulses which dominated childhood, and of the methods of expression that were then available.

Freud distinguishes three kinds of regression: topographical, in terms of the three systems, Cs, Pcs, Ucs; temporal, going back in time to older structures; formal, where archaic methods of expression and representation take the place of the more ordinary ones.

Wish-Fulfillment. It has already been shown that recent and indifferent material can appear in a dream. But such material is secondary. A wish that is represented in a dream must be an infantile one. It comes from the unconscious.

The unconscious cannot enter consciousness directly, but establishes connections with ideas which already belong to the preconscious. This is an example of transference. As used here "transference" is related to but is not the same as "the transference" observed in the analytic relationship. The most recent and indifferent elements are objects of this transference; furthermore, they are more likely to stand out because they have less to fear from the censorship.

Why does the unconscious offer nothing but a wish? In earliest childhood wishing ended in hallucinating the gratification, and thinking was nothing but a substitute for the hallucinatory wish. Then it becomes almost redundant to say that a dream is wish-fulfill-
ment, since only a wish can impel the psychic apparatus to activity.

Dreaming is thus a piece of mental life that has been superseded. No matter what wishes come up, one need feel no concern—it is only a dream, and therefore now harmless. If the wishes break through the censorship in waking life, what results is a psychosis. This led Freud to say later that in his dream the normal person becomes psychotic every night.

Psychoanalysis has shown that all neurotic symptoms are to be regarded as fulfillments of unconscious wishes. From this the value of dreams for an understanding of neurosis and the close tie between dreams and neurosis become evident.

Arousal by Dreams—The Function of Dreams—Anxiety Dreams. Releases of pleasure and unpleasure automatically regulate the course of cathectic processes; this was called the economic factor in the metapsychological scheme (see page 37). Every dream has some arousing effect; at the same time dreams serve to get rid of the disturbance of sleep. An unconscious wish can either be left to itself and discharged in movement, or it can be influenced by the preconscious and be bound by it instead of being discharged. The second process is the one that occurs in dreams. Thus the dream is a safety valve, or the guardian of sleep.

Anxiety in dreams is no different from anxiety in general. Anxiety dreams, too, contain a hidden gratification. The Primary and Secondary Processes—Repression. The dream work, involving extensive departures from rational thought, is a perplexing problem. To explain this and kindred phenomena, Freud postulated two basic processes: the primary and the secondary. The primary process is that which operates in the unconscious; it makes use of condensation and displacement; it easily shifts cathexes; it tolerates contradictions; it does not recognize negation; and in general it allows free mobility of cathexes. It seeks free discharge. It aims at perceptual identity. It is present from birth. The secondary process, by contrast, is man's rational self. It seeks to inhibit, rather than discharge. It can permit an idea to come to consciousness only if it can inhibit the unpleasure proceeding from it. It establishes thought identity. It is not present at birth, but develops only later.

The contrast between primary- and secondary-process thinking explains the phenomena of neurosis. Hence it can be said that the psychic mechanism employed by the neuroses is already present in the normal structure of the mental apparatus. And for all people the dream is the royal road to the unconscious.

The Unconscious and Consciousness—Reality. Lipps, one of the leading German psychologists of the 1890's had said: The unconscious is the problem of psychology. With this, of course, Freud was in fullest agreement; for him, the unconscious is the true psychic reality.

There are two kinds of unconscious—one inadmissible to consciousness (the true unconscious); the other admissible, the preconscious. From this point of view, Freud describes consciousness as a sense organ for the perception of psychical qualities.

There is a close connection between censorship and consciousness. The hypercathexis or excessive concentration of desire of mobile quantities set up by consciousness leads to the thought-processes, which are a new kind of regulation of unpleasure, and constitute the superiority of man over animals.

Freud's theory of the dream was worked out with such extraordinary thoroughness and attention to detail that in its essentials it remains unaltered to the present day. The alternative to Freud is to state that dreams are meaningless aberrations. But such an alternative goes contrary to the spirit of science which assumes that everything that takes place in nature has an adequate explanation if only we take the trouble to search for it.

In recent years a good deal of experimental work has been done, much of which confirms Freud's theories in many particulars. Fisher and his associates at Mt. Sinai Hospital in New York have conducted a series of investigations which tend to corroborate many of Freud's hypotheses concerning the day residue of dreams and unconscious perception. Kleitman and his associates have confirmed Freud's supposition that people dream every night. The apparent difference between those who dream and those who do not resolves itself into the real difference between those who remember their dreams and those who do not, which again leads to the Freudian point of view that dreams have some dynamic meaning, so that remembering them or forgetting them is a matter of considerable
psychic significance to the individual. Dement reports on some recent experiments in which the concept of dream deprivation has been set up. In these experiments it has been shown that if a person does not dream one night, he will tend to make up for it the next night. All this material tends to support, of course, the general approach to dreams which Freud adopted, although the basic theory that a dream is a disguised form of wish-fulfillment remains a theoretical construct based primarily on clinical observation.

THE PSYCHOPATHOLOGY OF EVERYDAY LIFE

Next to The Interpretation of Dreams the most important work of Freud's dealing with the unconscious was The Psychopathology of Everyday Life, issued in book form in 1904, though the material had previously been published in various journals. Undoubtedly this was the best received of all of Freud's writings. It went through ten editions in his lifetime. Illustrative material was continuously added, so that the last edition was almost four times the size of the original one.

Freud himself looked upon the work as a popular one. He made this point explicitly; in a footnote to page 173 he wrote:

This work is of an entirely popular character; it merely aims, by an accumulation of examples, at paving the way for the necessary assumption of unconscious yet operative mental processes, and it avoids all theoretical considerations on the nature of this unconscious.

Nevertheless, in spite of Freud's disclaimer, the work has important theoretical implications.

On the basis of his study of dreams Freud had formulated a theory of the unconscious. In Chapter VII of that work he had elaborated this theory with extraordinary thoroughness. From now on he could use this theory to understand and to explain a variety of different phenomena.

By the "psychopathology of everyday life," as has been noted, Freud referred to the variety of slips, errors, omissions, symptomatic actions, and mistakes of all kinds that occur to everybody a good deal of the time. Since then these have been given the generic name of "parapraxes." Before Freud this material simply had been ignored.

The thesis of the book is a relatively simple one. A great many errors are unconsciously motivated and a systematic analysis can reveal what these unconscious motives are. This is by no means to say that all errors are unconsciously motivated; indeed Freud was quite explicit in delineating the conditions under which there is justification in assuming that an unconscious motive is at play. Freud's theory as he envisioned it was therefore an addendum to the theory of normal remembering and forgetting, rather than a replacement of it. Thus he wrote:

Perhaps it is not superfluous to remark that the conditions which psychologists assume to be necessary for reproducing and forgetting, and which they look for in certain relations and dispositions, are not inconsistent with the above explanation. All we have done is, in certain cases, to add a motive to the factors that have been recognized all along as being able to bring about the forgetting of a name; and, in addition, we have elucidated the mechanism of false recollection (paramnesia).

And on the next page: "By the side of simple cases where proper names are forgotten there is a type of forgetting which is motivated by repression."

Because of its strong appeal to common sense, and the way in which it can easily be confirmed by even superficial introspection, this thesis has probably been more widely accepted than any other of Freud's, although it too has met opposition. Freud himself remarked that we are always psychoanalyzing other people in this way. Customarily men do interpret other people's errors in accordance with this view, namely, that they represent some unconscious wish.

Freud's book can profitably be compared with another classic of this period, the work of Ebbinghaus. Ebbinghaus conducted experiments on himself in learning and remembering, and noted meticulously the laws that seemed to govern the processes that went on in his mind. Since Ebbinghaus a variety of researchers have been able to confirm his findings and the general forms of the curves of learning and forgetting are by now reasonably well established.

In order to get away from the effects of past experience on memi-
ory, and to establish the "true laws" of memory, Ebbinghaus devised the technique of using nonsense syllables. He was trying to be as impersonal as possible. This technique obviously could ascertain only how material could be remembered that had relatively little or no meaning to the individual.

By contrast, Freud was interested in the remembering or forgetting of highly meaningful material. He went to the opposite extreme; instead of examining nonsense syllables, he looked into the accidental slips and omissions which lend themselves to observation but not to experimental investigation because they cannot be repeated at will.

Thus Freud and Ebbinghaus, or the currents which the two men represent, stand for two different approaches to the problem of human psychology. They complement one another and do not stand in any contradiction to each other.

In order to distinguish between the forgetting which is the result of normal psychological processes, and that which is motivated by repression or unconscious drives, Freud specified that a faulty psychic action must satisfy the following conditions:

1. It must not exceed a certain measure, designated by the expression "within normal limits."
2. It must evince the character of a momentary and temporary disturbance. The same action must have been previously performed more correctly or we must always rely on ourselves to perform it more correctly; if we are corrected by others, we must immediately recognize the truth of the correction and the incorrectness of our psychic action.
3. If we at all perceive a faulty action, we must not perceive in ourselves any motivation of the same, but must attempt to explain it through "inattention" or attribute it to an "accident."

With the concept of the screen memory, a most important area was opened up by Freud. By the screen memory, Freud meant any childhood memory. It is a "screen" because theoretically it conceals a number of other earlier memories; the assumption is that it is the end-product of a long chain that has previously been repressed and is now inaccessible. Ordinary reflection on the human being's ability to remember his childhood leads to the assumption that the concept of the screen memory must have some justification to it. For of the millions of events that actually occurred in a person's lifetime, he ordinarily remembers only a selected handful. There must be some reason why this particular handful is remembered rather than some other.

The usual theoretical investigations of the memory process have not concerned themselves with this fairly obvious observation, so that once again the Freudian theory supplements the conventional approach. And again, in the investigation of screen memories, the technique of eliciting associations frequently yields fruitful results.

Freud recognized that this book was more of a contribution to normal than to abnormal psychology. The very title, which brings out the relationship to everyday life, indicates that he was here concerned with what happens to the average person.

In the analytic literature there has been relatively little follow-up of Freud's work with respect to parapraxes. No essential change in theory has been suggested; as with dreams, Freud did the work so thoroughly that it has never had to be done over again. There have, of course, been a large number of clinical observations, many of them in Freud's lifetime, along the same lines as his.

In the past few years Freud's observations on memory and other errors connected with the cognitive processes have been further investigated by a number of experimental psychologists. The term "perceptual defense" has been coined to describe the manner in which perception (and of course other cognitive processes) can be used to ward off unpleasant impressions and to facilitate the reception of pleasant impressions. It has been shown that many distortions may occur which are occasioned by the person's need to see the world in a more favorable light.

In view of the soundness and profundity of the Psychopathology of Everyday Life it is pertinent to examine more critically Freud's own evaluation of it as a "popular" work devoid of "theoretical" value.

The question leads at once into the nature of a scientific theory and of Freud's thinking in this area. Freud's views of science stem mainly from the teaching current during his university days, in the 1870's and 1880's. As has been noted, at that time the scientific com-
munity was still dominated by the sense of absolute certainty embodied in the Newtonian world-scheme. In this scheme a theory is something that ties together various observations with more fundamental knowledge; a theory was required only because certain facts were missing. Basic to all science was the comforting notion that mathematics at least was inherently true, and that the laws of logic represented a priori laws of the mind, again inherently true and invariable.

In the years of Freud's maturity both these positions were pretty thoroughly demolished. Relativity and quantum theory turned the world topsy-turvy. Mathematical logic could find nothing that was absolutely true, and Bertrand Russell coined his famous aphorism that mathematics is the science in which we never know what we are talking about nor whether what we say is true. With this turnabout in the philosophy of science, the very nature of theory becomes much more elastic. Fact and theory come closer; a fact is no longer so factual and a theory is no longer so theoretical. Or as some prefer to put it, the difference between a fact and a theory becomes merely one of degree.9

Although modern clinical psychology is in a very real sense Freud's creation, he displayed throughout his life a most remarkable ambivalence toward it. Psychology as Freud pursued it consists of a series of observations, at first clinical, later broader in scope. How could these observations have any theoretical meaning? To explain them he had to go back to what he had been taught to believe was scientific truth—to physiology or biology or history; at best he compromised on "metapsychology" (literally: beyond psychology). At the same time he was too sound a thinker really to accept these other disciplines as absolutely secure; intuitively he rebelled against his teachers, yet he could never bring himself to make a total break. Accordingly, here, as in many other areas which will be investigated, Freud is to be found moving back and forth between psychology and biology or history or some other field.

By and large this has led to a serious misunderstanding of Freud. By taking various passages out of context it is possible to show that he was a biologist or a physiologist or a believer in evolutionary explanations—all of which statements are partly true. But all of them only obscure the fundamental consistency of his position as a psychologist.

In _The Psychopathology of Everyday Life_ Freud has made a fundamental contribution to our understanding of everyday human conduct. His theory here might be formulated in this way: In his everyday life man is governed by a variety of wishes. Under certain conditions these wishes break through and interfere with otherwise routine functioning. It is possible to specify what the conditions are and to clarify the processes involved. This theory of Freud's has remained and has stimulated much further thinking on the subject.

Available English Translations of Freud's works cited in Chapter IV

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