

THE OEDIPUS COMPLEX IN THE PSYCHONEUROSES

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Read before the American Psychopathological Association at Boston, May 29, 1912.

Voir [commentaires en français](#) à la fin

ONE of the most important of complexes is the Oedipus complex, as it frequently furnishes the underlying mental mechanism of many psychoneuroses and of abnormal sexual inversions. This Oedipus-trend usually has its origin during the earliest years of childhood, and in adults it may appear in dreams, in the form of a psychoneurosis or as homo-sexuality, the latter originating as a reaction of defense against the suppressed and unconscious Oedipus ideas. The most convenient and readiest method of analyzing this Oedipus complex in adults is through the dreams. These dreams may appear in two distinct types, either as a literal incest dream, or as is more commonly the case, in a disguised and symbolized form, such as the death of the father. Even the literal dreams, however, as will be later demonstrated, frequently contain many symbolized and disguised elements. If the suppression of the complex has been inefficacious, the Oedipus-trend appears literally in the dream; if the suppression has been completely successful, due to the building up of incest barriers, the complex becomes markedly symbolized. The degree of symbolism runs parallel, therefore, with the success of the suppression.

The complex develops only in those children who have been exposed to an over-exuberant love from the parents, or who themselves have shown a parental affection of abnormal intensity. The Oedipus dreams originate from these infantile elements of the unconscious in the exposed individual, and are the symbolic expressions of these elements, indicating in an admirable manner this early sexual love of the son for the mother. In these cases, the later development of the psychoneurosis may be interpreted as the successful revenge of the nervous system upon this Oedipus complex. In fact, a psychosexual family-complex is frequently the fundamental mechanism of a later neurosis. In a previous contribution, I pointed out and analyzed how an important childhood symptom was a family-complex and this in turn led to the development of a typical hysteria. This psychosexual trend is termed the Oedipus complex, as it is identical with the Oedipus legend and its portrayal in the Oedipus Tyrannus of Sophocles. The occurrence of the complex has also been pointed out in a recent analysis and interpretation of the tragedy of Hamlet. In fact, in the light of psychoanalysis, the words of Jocasta to Oedipus in the Greek tragedy have almost a prophetic significance: "Oft times in dreams, have men committed incest." Recent studies in comparative mythology have also served to throw light upon the relation of this complex to the psychoneuroses. In the Oedipus fable are contained elements which many psychoneurotics frequently repress, namely, an early love for the mother and an early hate for the father. Thus, the representation of a forbidden wish became symbolized in the Oedipus idea. It is this repressed wish, which has been responsible for the origin of both myth and psychoneurosis. Probably therefore, the Oedipus myth arose out of the literal and therefore incompletely repressed incest dreams or wishes. In the Oedipus fable certain childhood wishes were fulfilled and realized in the same manner that the conflict between father and son was represented by the myth of Uranos and the Titans. Thus, myths contain the infantile mental life of man, representing and symbolizing his childhood ideas and experiences. This, it appears to us, is a far more logical attitude than to interpret Oedipus as a solar hero, and the expiation for the incest crime merely a later addition to satisfy a moral feeling.

This naturally brings us face to face with the problem of infantile sexuality, particularly sexual inhibition, the incest complex with its later barriers and the relation of these to the origin and development of the psychoneuroses. That this Oedipus complex may exist is proven from the results of psychoanalysis, and that this complex can predetermine a later psychoneurosis and appear in a literal or symbolized form in dreams is an incontestable fact. In fact, the complex represents an unconscious fixation for the mother. The mechanism of how it does this is probably the sinking of an infantile wish into the unconscious. There, the censorship finds this incest trend to be incompatible with consciousness, and therefore when it reappears it does so in a disguised form, either as a psychoneurosis, morbid anxiety, or a symbolized dream. Sometimes when the censorship is not

sufficiently strong, the incest-complex appears as a literal dream, although it may contain disguised elements. Thus, it seems, in some cases at least, where it is possible through means of psychoanalysis to reach the childhood sexual processes, that the sexual instinct appears in the form of a clear incest-trend, sometimes disguised in the shape of over-affection for the mother, sometimes a distinct libido whose excitement is reached through various non sexual erogenous zones, and finally sometimes in the form of an open hate and hostility toward the father. The neurotic symptoms result from the repression of this incest libido and the attempt of the censor to create an amnesia for this Oedipus-trend is purposeful, but sometimes unsuccessful, for the Oedipus elements may break through into consciousness later in life.

Sometimes the sexual feeling for the mother may be so intensely suppressed, and so associated with the feeling of shame and guilt, that a compromise arises in the form of homosexuality. This mental mechanism took place in a case of homosexuality which I had occasion to analyze. Here the homosexual change took place at puberty, at which time the subject identified his mother as a sexual object in his day dreams, because in early childhood she had allowed physical relations of a sexual nature.

In the same manner that language is full of metaphorical sexual symbols, both furnishing a convenient aesthetic method of expressing sexual matters which could not otherwise be expressed in a more direct and coarser manner.

As attention in the clinical material will be chiefly directed to the analysis and development of the Oedipus complex, only such other data of the individual cases will be given as may be necessary to elucidate the origin of the complex, its later appearance in the dreams and the reactions of defense toward the complex which caused the symptoms of the psychoneurosis. In the four cases studied, and in the homosexual case briefly referred to earlier in the course of this paper, the Oedipus complex was probably the chief mental mechanism at work in the formation of the psychoneurosis. In one of the cases where reveries of pain acted as a sexual stimulant, it was but a step to the formation of an Oedipus complex, where the inflictor of pain was identified with the subject's mother. In two of the cases the Oedipus trend arose as a defense reaction against a family conflict. In the fourth case, the Oedipus complex caused distinct anxiety attacks, while the dreams furnished interesting examples of number symbolism in which the complex was hidden. The dreams in all our cases were built upon the entire suppressed pathogenic complexes. This is shown by the fact that the Oedipus idea ran through all the dream material.

Thus it seems, from an analysis of my clinical material, that in subjects who were either predisposed to psychoneurotic disturbances, or who had been exposed to an over exuberant parental affection, sexual impulses of an abnormal nature may be demonstrated early in childhood life. This impulse may be quite complicated and may take the form of masochism, sadism, or the development of an Oedipus trend. Part of these impulses were wishes and part were erotic fantasies, in which the wish element was entirely absent. These abnormal sexual tendencies, however, laid the foundation, through their repression into the unconscious, for the later development of a psychoneurosis, — in fact, in our material, the psychoneurosis was due to the bursting forth of these unconscious elements into adult life. There, it was either partially symbolized in the form of symptoms, dreams or abnormal behavior, or it appeared in a literal form, with disguised elements, according to the degree of successful repression. The amnesia for this Oedipus complex was successful and striking. The complex could be reached only after great resistance through the analysis of disguised or literal dreams containing the Oedipus trend. It was out of these unconscious, infantile sexual elements that the Oedipus complex developed.

The reaction to this incest complex in three cases was a means of secret pleasure and gratification to the patients, in the same way that they found pleasure in their abnormal, auto-erotic fantasies and voluptuous reveries. In the fourth case, the complex gave rise to painful attacks of morbid anxiety. In order to avoid repetition, other details will be given in the course of the individual analyses.

Case I

A, a young man, twenty-five years of age, had suffered for eight months before he came under observation from a well-defined and gradually increasing psychasthenia, of the type of a compulsion neurosis. At the time of the onset of his psychoneurosis, he noticed a gradually increasing abnormal fatigue, sleeplessness, and restlessness, which he attributed to his work, but which, nevertheless, was not dissipated by rest. Shortly afterwards he began to notice that in his work as an analytical chemist there developed a tendency to wash various pieces of laboratory glassware a number of times before he became certain they were clean. In his analytical work, also, he began to doubt the accuracy of his calculating and weighing, and was in continual fear of making errors. These repetitions of actions gave him a sense of relief, whereas if he resisted the repetition he would soon become restless, and at times develop typical anxiety attacks. Indecision in his thought and behavior became marked. For years the sexual tendencies have been abnormal, the details of which it is not necessary to relate except to state that he has strongly repressed the memory of his various abnormal sexual acts.

On analysis, the compulsive acts and the mania of repetition could be clearly shown to be reactions of defense and compromises with the suppressed sexual ideas. These continual repetitions finally became an automatism which completely dominated and mastered him. Finally, there developed strong irresistible impulses to pick up and accumulate all kinds of useless rubbish. If these impulses were resisted, a typical attack of cardiac anxiety would develop, whereas if yielded to, there followed a sense of relief akin to his former sexual satisfaction. The dreams were either disguised sexual symbolisms, or were literal rehearsals of his past abnormal sexual acts. In a psychoanalysis of the condition, among other interesting dreams, the following typical Oedipus complex dream was recorded and analyzed. It seemed to furnish the main complex responsible for the development of the psychoneurosis and its elements could be traced back to the earliest years of childhood.

Dream.

He seemed to be engaged in the sexual act with his mother, whose body in the dream resembled that of a young girl. During the act there was neither excitement nor a feeling of revulsion. The dream suddenly terminated by a knock at the door and the entrance of an unrecognized person into the room.

Analysis.

Five years after the marriage of the patient's mother, she gave birth to twins, the patient himself and a brother. His father was a number of years older than the mother. She was his second wife and on his marriage he brought a young son, by his first wife, into the new household. Before the patient's birth, his mother had some difficulty with her stepson until finally the boy was sent away from home, and he very rarely saw his step-brother after this episode. In consequence of his father's first marriage, he always felt that he did not obtain the full share of his father's love, because he considered that he was more closely attached to the son by the former wife. This emotion of resentment towards his half-brother could be traced back to the earliest years of childhood; in fact the subject could not recollect a time from which this feeling was absent. During these early years he also doubted if his father were lavishing upon his mother the full share of love and attention to which he felt she was entitled. He was certain that the memory of his father's first wife and the feeling that perhaps his paternal affections were stronger for her and for their son, were strong factors in this sense of hostility.

As a result of this reasoning and mental conflict, he developed the idea that his (the patient's) love for his mother was greater than his father's affection for her, and as a consequence, for years and even up to the present time, he has had more affection for his mother than for his father. For instance, he has more confidence in his mother and has confided matters to her which he has never told his father, because he felt that his mother understood him better. As far as he could observe during the early years of childhood, his father at least never outwardly showed much affection for his mother, and, therefore, as a compensation he began to demonstrate an over-fondness for her. He would so fondle, hug, and kiss his mother in public that bystanders would comment on this attitude of over-affection.

Up to a certain age, the household arrangement was such that his twin brother slept with his father, while he slept with his mother. This plan particularly pleased him, as it gave him the opportunity of intimate physical contact with her. The arrangement continued up to the time he was about ten years

of age. Then a change took place, and he and his twin brother slept together in a bed which was placed in their parents' room. He was admonished, however, by his mother, that if he were afraid to sleep alone, or if at any time he became frightened during the night, he could come to his mother's bed again. Thereupon shortly afterwards he purposely would cry out and manifest great fear during the night, would make excuses that he was nervous in order that he might be taken to his mother's bed and thus replace his father, who under these circumstances would be compelled to sleep with his twin brother. On these occasions, he would imagine that he was giving his mother an amount of affection which she did not receive from her husband, would embrace and kiss her, etc. At about the same time he began to feel that his father was cold in his attitude towards him and loved his twin brother better, a mental conflict which soon developed into a marked but repressed hostility towards his father. Once, while sleeping with his twin brother, he accidentally saw the sexual act between his father and mother. This he interpreted as a vulgar species of masturbation with which he was acquainted, because he had already acquired the habit and he resented that anyone, even his father, should treat his mother in that manner.

In addition, for years he feared that another child might come into the family. Any such occurrence would have meant to him a terrible calamity because he knew that the inevitable consequence would be that his mother's love would naturally be expended on the young infant, to the neglect of him; and secondly, he knew that pregnancy, for a time at least, would deform his mother's body. This latter was especially distasteful to him, as he experienced the most voluptuous sensations by rubbing his hand over the skin of various portions of his mother's body, and sometimes these actions were associated with a marked libido.

Thus, little by little his hostility towards his father grew stronger and stronger, he respected him less and less, and, consequently, he became more strongly attached to his mother. As his father took a domineering attitude towards his mother, he felt that he must protect her, particularly since his twin brother seemed more strongly attached to his father.

On a number of occasions, he has dreamed that either his father or twin brother were dead, a disguising of the Oedipus-trend, resulting in an unconscious wish-fulfillment of their deaths, so that his attitude to and his relations with his mother might be undisturbed. His twin brother also entered into these dreams, because he felt that this brother, like his father, was antagonistic to his mother and, therefore, he unconsciously wished both removed, although the wish was suppressed and only appeared in a disguised, symbolic form. As he grew older, his day dreams of the ideal woman he desired for a wife always took the form of someone who resembled his mother in physical appearance and character, sometimes indeed the woman would be actually identified with his mother. Later other Oedipus dreams appeared in which the incest complex was transferred to an indifferent person, usually much older than the patient, and yet on analysis this person could always be identified with his mother.

Thus there has been given an extended analysis of a dream showing a typical, undisguised Oedipus complex. This literal Oedipus dream is rather rare, as in most cases the incest complex is usually disguised and assumes the form of the death or the funeral of the person who interferes with the love towards the mother — that is, the death of the father. The intense desire to sleep with his mother was for the purpose of interfering in any further sexual acts, and to prevent his mother being rendered ugly and deformed through pregnancy. Thus, he not only learned to love his mother, but on analysis this feeling for her could be shown to have a sexual basis. As he grew older, this impulse to a definite-object selection was interpreted as an incestuous fantasy, which profoundly influenced the development of the compulsion neurosis.

In the Oedipus dream there is an interesting displacement, the mother appearing as a young girl, thus representing the imaginary wish-fulfillment that his mother were a younger woman. Although there was no open hostility displayed against his father, yet a repressed hostility could be demonstrated, because he felt that his father was a rival for his mother's love. When quarrels took place at home, his twin brother would side with his father while the patient would take his mother's part, so that she would not stand alone.

It is interesting to note, that while the patient was in the habit, during the course of the analysis, of writing down all his dreams, yet he omitted to write the dream containing the incest-complex, merely relating it verbally and excusing his failure to write it down because he considered it unimportant. This

failure to spontaneously relate a dream is an example of a trick of the censor, an effort of the unconscious to prevent the complex from reaching consciousness. In the analysis of the dreams containing the Oedipus trend, the resistance was marked because of the strong repression.

Thus, the disguised and undisguised Oedipus dreams in this case arose from a repressed complex of an incest wish. The particular dream analyzed was markedly condensed and literal. The nakedness in the dream was an erotic symbol of childhood joy and delight in exhibitionism. The simulated fear at night when sleeping alone was for the purpose of entering into closer physical contact with his mother, a mental mechanism analogous to simulated foolishness in hysteria.

The dream showed several complexes, namely, an incest complex, a displacement complex, and an exhibitionism complex. It is interesting, too, that in spite of an Oedipus trend, there was no sexual excitement in the dream, a kind of an unconscious wish to neutralize the incest complex due to the building up of incest barriers. Yet on the other hand, a sense of revulsion was absent, demonstrating that although a sexual feeling might be incompatible with consciousness, yet this absence of revulsion might be a compromise for excitement. Why the dream was not completely symbolized can be answered only on the supposition that there was a weakened censorship, leading to an incomplete suppression of the complex.

Case II

B, a young man thirty-two years of age, for a number of years had suffered from a psychasthenic condition in which he felt compelled by certain tests to search out omens in nearly all the acts of everyday life. These omens or testings finally became so severe and reached such a complex degree, that he became greatly depressed, and obsessed by marked religious scruples. At the height of the compulsion of omen testing he would have a typical attack of anxiety, with restlessness, tachycardia, and dryness of the mouth and tongue. In this case there was a marked sexual hyperesthesia and it could be demonstrated through a psychoanalysis that in early childhood he was subject to intense auto-erotic reveries of a sadistic-masochistic character. These reveries assumed the type of punishment by a woman. This latter was closely interwoven with complicated and marked abnormal religious ideas and scruples. In the course of the analysis, a well-developed psychosexual family-complex could be demonstrated. Through the dream analysis it could be shown that it was but a step from the sexual ideas of being subdued and punished by a woman to the development of a fully developed Oedipus complex, particularly since the active punisher was identified with the subject's mother.

Dream.

He seemed to be in the company of an older man and was about to buy some yellow roses for his father's funeral. In the dream there seemed to be little or no emotion concerning his father's recent death. Then the dream suddenly shifted and he appeared to be in a carriage, driving home from his father's funeral. He was quite jolly, and although in the dream this did not seem quite the proper attitude at such a time, yet no attempt was made to suppress this exalted state.

Analysis.

This is a typical, disguised Oedipus complex dream based upon an imaginary wish-fulfillment. Both the father and mother were alive and in good health at the time of the dream. As a child he was decidedly over-fond and over-affectionate towards his mother, but thought less of his father, in fact towards the latter he was hostile in a blind, unreasonable manner.

At a very early period of life he began to have sexual excitement of a peculiar nature. On analysis, this was found to be a form of ideal or psychical masochism. He would imagine himself physically exposed by a definite woman, and then whipped upon the exposed buttocks. This imaginary punishment would be the source of an intense sexual excitement. These masochistic tendencies were either actually visualized at night, while he was in bed, or they formed part of his childhood reveries during the day. In association with the infliction of the punishment and consequent pain, on analysis there could be demonstrated a typical Oedipus complex. In other words, he always selected for the active punisher a married woman with children, about his mother's age, a kind of substituted incest complex. Finally, this imaginary punishment was carried to a point where the woman physically and mentally not only resembled his mother, but in time actually became his mother. Thus in a roundabout imaginary masochism he managed to have sexual excitement with a kind of substituted mother, in reality a typical Oedipus complex. In addition, he would lie awake during the night and allow these ideas of passive cruelty to flit through his mind, and with the ideas there was associated an intense sexual excitement. Gradually there occurred a transference of his sexual punishment to ideas of religious punishment for imaginary sins and blasphemies, because he felt that these sexual ruminations were wrong and sinful. Sometimes these feelings of subjugation would reach such a point that he would imagine he were locked in a room, in order that the idea of complete subjugation and bondage might be intensified.

There have been frequent dreams of his father lying dead in a coffin, but he has never dreamed of his father coming to life after death. He has, however, dreamed of his mother lying in a casket and as he watched, her body would come to life. Here we have distinct examples of an unconscious wish-fulfillment. There have also been dreams of a literal Oedipus variety. In these dreams his mother appeared much younger, here again a wish of the unconscious for sexual excitement with his mother, who must at the same time be a young woman. Sometimes the sadistic-masochistic imagery would become elaborated and highly dramatic; for instance, he would imagine that he was imprisoned by a powerful woman and kept a prisoner for purely sexual purposes. Since sexual ideas in association with his mother were repulsive to him and since he repressed these, he attached his libido to other

women whom he substituted for his mother in all details except in name. The infliction of pain by a beloved person is a form of erotic symbolism exercised through an unconscious mental mechanism that has a sexual coloring. In the analysis given above, the unconscious masochistic mechanism was a typical Oedipus complex, but disguised and symbolized because of the feeling of repulsion towards an incest trend.

Case III

C, a young man twenty-four years of age, for several years had been troubled with a phobia of red. Whenever he looked at a red object, it seemed living and animated. This phobia followed a so-called nervous breakdown four years previously, in which, among other symptoms, there developed a fear of insanity, attacks of anxiety and depression, fatigue, a fear that he might commit suicide by throwing himself down from high places, etc. For years, he felt that he was physically unattractive. He therefore did not seek the company of women, but was in the habit of acquiring his sexual satisfaction by erotic reveries of mutilation of the genitals of himself and others, in his imagination torturing them without the use of an anaesthetic. The absence of any anaesthesia always furnished an integral portion of these reveries. This psychical sadism and masochism often took on the character of a most elaborate ceremonial, such as initiation into some secret society, a medieval festival, or imprisonment of the imaginary victim in an old feudal castle or dungeon. In these reveries and day-dreams the blood which resulted from the imaginary tortures on analysis proved to be the unconscious mental process which finally developed into the phobia of red. Other details are given in the analysis of the Oedipus complex, which existed to a marked degree in this subject. This complex also furnished a portion of the unconscious deterministic process, which made up a portion of the phobia of red. The Oedipus complex in this case played a part equally potent with the sexual reveries in the formation of the psychasthenic state and it appeared in several typical disguised dreams.

Dream.

He seemed to be carrying the dead body of his father and placing it on a shelf. His sorrow did not appear very deep, although his mother, who was present, seemed greatly grieved. He attempted to pronounce the burial service over his father's body, but could not seem to remember it, and later, when he attempted to extemporize such a service, he likewise failed.

Analysis.

In this dream, there is a typical disguised Oedipus complex. Early in childhood, because his father once returned home intoxicated, there had developed a gradually increasing hatred of his father, and as a result he avoided him and tried to blot him out of his life. In consequence, the love for his mother grew greater and greater. He has never wished for a brother or sister, because, after the above-mentioned episode with his father, he became very jealous and afraid that the appearance of another child in the family might deprive him completely of his mother's affection. For years, he has secretly wished for his father's death. Although he strongly repressed this wish, yet at any time his father became ill there arose a secret joy in the thought that perhaps he might not recover from his illness. The fact that he could not remember a word of the burial service in the dream, whereas he could partially repeat it when awake, is an interesting example of censorship. He could not remember it because he did not wish to remember it. Even before the mentioned episode, he never was over-affectionate towards his father, although he never had a feeling of hostility. This he explained as arising from the fact that his father paid little attention to him and never fondled or played with him when he was a child. There were times when his mother's attention to his father made him intensely jealous, and, therefore, he often thought that if his father were dead the source of the jealousy would be removed. He was never openly hostile against his father, because of the repressed love for his mother. Little by little, however, the love for his mother deepened, and he desired to be more intimate with her because she was of the opposite sex. He has never dreamed of his mother being dead. On several occasions, when a child, there developed a sexual feeling for his mother, and it was only with some difficulty that this impulse was controlled.

In another dream of a most elaborate character, this change of attitude towards his father and the increased love for his mother was clearly symbolized. This dream was very complicated, as portions of it contained a sexual ceremonial complex that is not necessary to relate here. The part of the dream containing the repressed family conflict is as follows.

Dream.

He seemed to be with his father at the coronation of King George, waiting for the coronation parade. Suddenly the King came, followed by the Queen. The latter wore a blonde wig and both acted in a most undignified manner. He was however attracted to the King. It was afterwards learned that they

were not the real King and Queen, but imitators who had been hired for the occasion. Later in the day he met the real King and Queen. The latter resembled his mother in features and actions, and he immediately developed a deep affection for her. The King, however, he greatly disliked.

Analysis.

It has been shown that up to a certain age the subject liked his father but cared little for his mother. Later, however, this affection became reversed. Thus, this portion of the dream is a disguised Oedipus-trend, and is a secondary elaboration of the main theme. The dream displacement Queen for his mother, with its consequent affection, is very interesting, representing as it does his change of mental and emotional attitude towards his mother. Later the Oedipus motive reappeared in the following.

Dream.

He seemed to be going through a marriage ceremony with a young girl, and his mother seemed to be reading the ceremony. Finally when they came to the words "love, honor, and obey," both he and the girl refused to assent to this phrase, wherewith he was secretly glad.

Analysis.

For years has had the feeling that he would not care to marry, because he had the idea that he would not wish to degrade his wife by coitus, the same idea which he had concerning his father and mother when a young child. Further analysis showed that in the dream he was really marrying his mother, but the situation was displaced and transferred to the young girl because of the incest barrier, although the wish-fulfillment was distinctly present. In the dream he abhorred the girl he was about to marry, but loved his mother, and preferred to marry her rather than the girl. The incest fallacy was not perceived in the dream, because again, by a trick of the censor, he did not wish to see it.

The complex again appeared in the following dream. He appeared to be in a store and about to purchase a red curtain. They did not have it in stock, and when later he returned in the company of his mother, it appeared that his father had recently died. Analysis of this dream revealed the following complex. One night, when quite young, he overheard his mother reprimanding his father concerning the latter's alcoholic habits. She stated that if he did not stop, that he would die of apoplexy, as this was already indicated by his red complexion. After this episode he kept noticing his father to see if the complexion continued red, as this would indicate to him alcoholism, apoplexy, and then death, a death which he secretly desired on account of the feeling of hostility towards his father. By an over-compensation, his love was then transferred towards his mother.

It is interesting to note that this dream was not written down with the other dreams, as was the subject's habit, but was told verbally and carelessly because, according to his explanation, he thought it unimportant. The real explanation was, however, that he did not record the dream because he did not wish to have it analyzed, as it contained some of the most painful elements of the complex. The unconscious knew, if that particular dream were analyzed, the repressed complex would be reached and the cause of the dream brought into consciousness. Therefore the unconscious attempted to hide the dream containing this complex by making consciousness believe that it was unimportant. An exactly similar mechanism took place in the first of our reported cases.

Finally, the Oedipus complex again appeared in the following dream, thus demonstrating how the dream life in the course of the psychoneurosis was completely hinged with the Oedipus-trend.

Dream.

A red-faced, black-bearded chaplain of the Navy was reading a funeral service at the burial of the victims of the battleship Maine. Several times in the midst of the service he referred to casket number two. Finally, he opened this casket, exposing the body to view. The corpse was partially decomposed and white-bearded, and on looking at it, the patient found that he was gazing at the dead body of his father.

Analysis.

Here again the childhood wish-fulfillment of his father's death appeared in a dream. A displacement again occurred, the florid complexion of his father being transferred to the chaplain. In the subject's childhood he often made imaginary funerals with casket-shaped building blocks, and in his day-dreams he always imagined he was burying his father, never his mother. Not only did he wish his father's death in order to gain his mother's entire affection, but in order that he might have a stepfather who would treat both him and his mother more kindly. Thus, the number two on the coffin was not an accidental occurrence, but predetermined by unconscious complexes, namely, the unconscious wish for a second father and for his mother a second husband. In the event of his father's death, he also wished that his mother would marry his father's bachelor brother, who was rich and prominent, thus developing what may be termed a Hamlet complex.

Case IV

The following typical case of an anxiety neurosis offers an excellent example of the following statement from Freud: "When a once healthy person merges into disease after an unhappy love affair, the mechanism of the disease can distinctly be explained as a return of his libido to the persons preferred in his infancy."

D, a young man thirty-four years of age, about two months after his betrothal to a young woman, began to suffer from typical anxiety attacks. The first of these attacks took place at night. He awoke from sleep in a panic, with a feeling of muscular rigidity, anxiety, and terror. At the end of three or four hours the attack subsided, but it was repeated on several successive nights. Since then he has complained of a sense of lassitude, indifference, and fatigue, with occasional anxiety phenomena, these latter were of less severity than the earlier attacks. The physical examination was negative and there were no stigmata of hysteria. The mental state associated with the physical anxiety and sense of precordial distress was an unexplainable sense of repulsion towards his fiancée and a feeling that he had committed a grave error in becoming betrothed. Therefore, he determined to terminate the betrothal, but circumstances were such that a marked sense of indecision arose. A psychoanalysis, however, conducted partly through free association procedures and partly through the dreams, revealed the unconscious mechanism of the feelings of repulsion and indecision and of the morbid anxiety.

Psychoanalysis.

Several weeks before the first anxiety attack he began to feel that he was committing a great error in planning for marriage, and thus breaking away from old family associations. For years there had been a sense of very close intimacy with the family, particularly for his mother. In fact, the patient was the eldest of four children, and his mother, therefore, had always seemed more interested in him than in the other members of the family. Thus while he was the favorite of his mother, he never felt so closely drawn to his father, although at no time was there any actual feeling of hate or hostility. It further developed that eight years previously the patient had experienced another unhappy love affair, although without any symptoms of morbid anxiety. In the light of what follows during the course of the analysis, this episode is of significance, for it could be shown that the anxiety did not develop then because his feelings for the young woman were greater than his affection for his mother, a situation exactly opposite to the situation at present.

For years, he was much attached to his mother, and even during the period of engagement his mother occupied his thoughts to a great extent. The emotional anaesthesia towards the young woman seemed, therefore, to be due to the inhibitory influence of this unconscious family complex, particularly his deep affection towards his mother. Thus there arose a mental conflict, — whether to break away from old and fixed family ties and associations or to enter into the new relationship of marriage, thus severing all relations at once, — a typical Oedipus complex. He entered into the new relationship of a betrothal and a possible marriage with a mental reservation caused by this complex, which had such an inhibitory influence that he could not fully transfer the affection he felt for his mother to his fiancée. His fiancée he considered a rival for his mother's love, and the morbid anxiety was the effort of the unconscious to neutralize the rivalry and the resulting mental conflict. He had always been over-exuberant in his love for his mother, and for years entertained the thought that he could never marry while his mother was alive. He has dreamed that his father and various members of the family have died, but he has never dreamed of his mother's death. Thus, the mother-complex blocked the affection for his fiancée and caused the emotional indifference.

As a result of this analysis, which has clearly laid bare an Oedipus complex, the cause of the anxiety attacks becomes clear, namely, they resulted from unconscious motives and incubations in which the repressed love for his mother was more powerful than his feeling for his fiancée. Additional data showed a neurotic family history and revealed the fact that since childhood the patient had been subject to states of anxiety and timidity on facing new enterprises.

An analysis of the dreams revealed other phases of the repressed complexes, and also furnished interesting examples of number symbolisms or unconscious manipulations of numbers. It could be shown that the numbers appearing in the dreams were not accidental but that they represented the

important unconscious mental conflicts of the subject, — namely, the Oedipus complex, — and this bore an intimate relationship to the biographic data secured.

Dream.

He seemed to be in a lawyer's office. The assistant was making notes and writing figures on sheets of yellow paper. The figures when added made the sum of 3,990. These figures seemed to be kind of an inventory of the subject's mental make-up, that is, integrity so much, honesty so much, etc. The assistant commented that the lowest figures were those concerned with the subject's affections and finally said, "It is useless to go on with this thing," which the subject interpreted as his betrothal.

Dream.

He seemed to be standing near a large building in front of which was a green-colored moving van with yellow lettering and the figures 317 painted thereon.

Analysis of the Number Dreams.

The first dream seemed to reduce his unconscious mental make-up and aspirations to an exact mathematical science. The yellow color in both dreams seemed to him to characterize the "yellow streak" in his character, — namely, the fear that he might not be able to honorably terminate the betrothal. The dream also meant to him a mathematical demonstration of lack of feeling for his betrothed. An analysis of the figures occurring in the two dreams demonstrated how complicated may be the various manipulations of figures taking place in the unconscious and furnished an exact demonstration of the subject's mental conflict. This number symbolism was as follows:

$$317 \Rightarrow 3 + 1 + 7 = 11$$

$$3990 \Rightarrow 39 + 9 + 0 = 48$$

$$48 + 11 = 59 \text{ (the age of the subject's mother).}$$

$$3 + 9 + 9 + 0 = 21$$

$$3 + 1 + 7 = 11$$

$$21 + 11 = 32 \text{ (the age of the subject's fiancée).}$$

Thus the numbers were not accidental, but clearly revealed the struggle taking place in the unconscious. This struggle was symbolized by numbers, representing both the age of the subject's mother and of the subject's fiancée; in other words, the emotional conflict of the Oedipus complex which produced the anxiety phenomena.

Commentaires

Résumé de la situation qui a conduit à l'analyse de nombres rêvés ci-dessus

En analyse, un patient déclara avoir vu en rêve une liste écrite de qualités qu'on lui prêtait, comme l'intégrité, l'honnêteté, etc., chacune associée à un nombre ; la somme de ces nombres était 3990. Il avait aussi vu un camion de déménagement sur lequel était peint le nombre 317. Le patient souffrait d'un complexe d'Œdipe.

Voici l'explication de cette somme fournie par l'analyste du patient :

$$317 \Rightarrow 3 + 1 + 7 = 11$$

$$3990 \Rightarrow 39 + 9 + 0 = 48$$

$48 + 11 = 59$ (l'âge de la mère du patient).

$3 + 9 + 9 + 0 = 21$

$3 + 1 + 7 = 11$

$21 + 11 = 32$ (l'âge de la fiancée du patient).

Conclusion du médecin analyste

Les nombres 3990 et 317 n'avaient donc pas été rêvés au hasard : ils révélaient un conflit dans le subconscient du patient, symbolisé par les âges de sa mère et de sa fiancée.

Critique de cette explication

- Le but du médecin analyste, révéler un éventuel conflit dans le subconscient du patient, a été atteint par une suite de manipulations de chiffres provenant du patient. Cette manipulation additionne tantôt des nombres de 2 chiffres, tantôt des nombres de 1 chiffre, nombres extraits de ceux que le patient a cités.

Le choix des extractions de chiffres à partir des nombres du patient est arbitraire, fait pour trouver une solution d'analyse expliquant les nombres rêvés. Il ne résulte d'aucune règle logique de choix des mécanismes inconscients nécessaires ; c'est donc une hypothèse ad hoc, construite pour prouver que l'inconscient du patient contient les âges de sa mère et de sa fiancée. L'absence de règle logique de choix des opérations suggère une heuristique : l'inconscient aurait fait *toutes* les manipulations nécessaires pour générer un rêve qui révèle les conflits, hypothèse peu plausible vu leur nombre immense même dans l'exemple cité.

La suite de manipulations de chiffres n'est évidemment pas la seule possible ; les deux paramètres « âge » ne sont pas les seuls paramètres liés à la vie du patient. On aurait pu, par exemple, choisir les adresses (numéros dans leurs rues) de la mère et de la fiancée, et construire d'autres manipulations ad hoc.

Cette démonstration de conflit subconscient paraît peu convaincante.

- On ne voit pas pourquoi l'inconscient humain connaîtrait l'arithmétique, notamment un système de numération avec ses règles de représentation et d'addition des nombres. Par définition, il ne pourrait l'avoir "appris à l'école", puisque la conscience n'y a pas accès. Comment l'inconscient du patient aurait-il pu savoir effectuer les opérations trouvées par l'analyste ?
- Les règles mathématiques d'addition ne sont pas évidentes : un bébé ne les connaît pas en naissant, il ne connaît même pas les nombres. Elles ont été établies dans un système décimal de représentation. Dans un autre système, binaire ou hexadécimal par exemple, elles auraient été différentes avec des reports (« et je retiens 1 ») différents ; ils auraient conduit à des résultats notés différemment. Avec un tel autre système, aurait-on aussi abouti aux âges physiques des deux femmes ? Ce n'est pas prouvé. Les résultats d'une analyse de patient (conflits psychologiques détectés) peuvent-ils dépendre de son système de numération ? Ce serait surprenant ! Bien sûr, en l'absence de "preuve numérique" l'analyste aurait cherché d'autres preuves...

- L'analyse des nombres rêvés est basée sur l'axiome suivant, énoncé par Freud dans *La psychopathologie de la vie quotidienne*, chapitre XII "Déterminisme, croyance au hasard et croyance superstitieuse, points de vue" :
« Il n'y a rien d'arbitraire, d'indéterminé dans le domaine psychique. Non seulement les nombres, mais aussi les idées de mots d'une autre sorte qui viennent à l'esprit s'avèrent régulièrement être bien déterminés, dès lors qu'on les soumet à l'investigation analytique. »

Le raisonnement intuitif de Freud dans ce domaine repose sur le principe du déterminisme des évolutions de systèmes physiques, qu'en bon matérialiste il considère comme sans exception. Schématiquement, il pense que :

- La pensée se déroule sans intervention divine, magique ou transcendante.
- La pensée, consciente ou non, se déroule dans le cerveau au moyen d'actions physiques des neurones (établissement de connexions et transmission d'impulsions à travers les axones par messages faits de molécules). Elle ne peut donc qu'être déterministe : chaque pensée a une cause physique, les lois physiques des pensées sont stables et conduisent à des résultats reproductibles, etc.
- Il n'y a donc pas de hasard : l'esprit humain ne peut contenir de pensée, consciente ou non, qui ne soit pas due à une cause physique antérieure. Tout nombre "au hasard" auquel il croit penser est créé par des mécanismes de ses neurones, donc déterministes, donc prévisibles.

Une étude détaillée du déterminisme et du hasard est disponible dans <http://www.danielmartin.eu/Philo/Determinisme.pdf> .

A l'évidence, Freud qualifie une chose d'aléatoire si et seulement si elle est imprévisible. Il ne pouvait savoir, à son époque, qu'il y a des processus déterministes dont le résultat est imprévisible (exemple : le résultat des calculs effectués par un programme informatique, déterministe car exécutant seulement des opérations déterministes, ne peut pas en général être connu au vu du texte du programme, il faut attendre la fin de son exécution). Le déterminisme n'entraîne pas la prédictibilité, mais l'absence de prédictibilité n'entraîne pas que le résultat final peut être n'importe quoi : il résulte de l'application d'une suite d'opérations, chacune déterministe et à résultat prévisible... connaissant sa situation initiale, elle-même résultant de l'opération précédente, qui elle-même..., etc.

En outre, il y a dans la nature des lois d'évolution déterministes (exemple : l'équation de Schrödinger) dont le résultat ne peut être connu que statistiquement : « Dans ce contexte-là, la probabilité que telle molécule d'un gène se lie à telle autre, à son contact, n'est que de 99,99 % ». C'est pourquoi les mécanismes de reproduction des gènes d'un être vivant font parfois « des erreurs », dans 0,01 % des cas dans notre exemple. Certaines de ces erreurs peuvent causer des mutations, d'autres des pathologies. Dans notre inconscient où plusieurs pensées se déroulent en même temps, certaines produiront un résultat imprévisible, comme une association de pensées surprenante.

Conclusion

L'analyse du rêve ne peut procéder que par faisceaux convergents de déductions, chacune provenant d'un fait réel connu et vérifiée par non-contradiction avec d'autres faits. L'interprétation analytique d'un nombre rêvé doit donc être très prudente. Elle doit

être assortie de nombreuses vérifications de non-contradiction avec d'autres faits établis et d'un contrôle d'unicité ; or nous venons de voir ci-dessus que cette dernière exigence sera difficile à satisfaire.

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