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On the Method of Dream Interpretation (PROFESSOR JUNG)

Professor Jung: In this seminar¹ we will deal primarily with the dreams of children. In addition, some books about the significance of dreams will be discussed.

All of the dreams with which we will concern ourselves have been contributed by the participants. In most cases they were remembered by adults from their childhood, and were not obtained from the children themselves. This poses a difficulty as, in the case of *remembered* dreams, we can no longer ask the children themselves but have to resort to other means in order to enrich the dream material and to understand the dream. But we are also in a difficult situation when we record dreams from children *directly*. We must always reckon with the possibility that the child does not supply any information at all or, for instance, does not have associations because of being frightened by the dream. Furthermore, it lies in the nature of the earliest dreams of childhood that one usually does not get related associations: they are a manifestation of a part of the unconscious, standing alien in time. These *early* dreams in particular are of the utmost importance because they are dreamed out of the depth of the personality and, therefore, frequently represent an anticipation of the later destiny. Subsequent dreams of children become more and more unimportant, except when the dreamer is destined for a special fate. During pu-

¹ Session of 25 October 1938.

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berty and until the twentieth year, dreams become more important again, then they lose importance, and finally they carry more and more weight again after the thirty-fifth year. This does not apply to all persons, but to the majority of cases. I would like to ask you to search your own memory if you can still remember the first dream of your life. Many remember dreams from their fourth year, others even from the third year. Maybe you could also ask your acquaintances and friends if they remember their first dreams. You should then also note what you know about the later lives of the dreamers, and also what you know about their families—if you know them—and whether you happened to notice any peculiarities among these.

Before starting our discussion of the individual dreams, I would like to make a few remarks on the *method of dream interpretation*.

As you know, the dream is a natural phenomenon. It does not spring from a special intention. One cannot explain it with a psychology taken from *consciousness*. We are dealing with a particular way of functioning independent of the human ego's will and wishes, intention or aim. It is an unintentional occurrence, just like everything occurring in nature. So we also cannot assume that the sky gets clouded only to annoy us; it simply is as it is. The difficulty is, however, to get a *handle* on that natural occurrence.

It seems best to be as unprejudiced as possible when we let things influence us. Yet anything we have to say about the event is still our *interpretation*. We are in the same situation as any natural scientist, who also deals with phenomena that do not reveal their meaning and conformity with a natural law. Any meaning given to what happens comes from *us*. We are facing the difficult task of translating natural processes into psychical language. To this end we have to use auxiliary and approximate terms for want of others, and make hypotheses. . . . But there always remains the doubt whether we have truly succeeded in giving a picture of what happens. One could, of course, argue that all of this has no meaning at all. If anything is subjective anyway, then one could as well say that nature does not conform to laws, that there is chaos. It is, however, a question of temperament whether to assume a meaning, even if one may not understand it yet, or to prefer saying: "All of this has no meaning anyway." But one can

also be of the opinion that, although each interpretation may always be a human assumption about what is happening, one can still try to find out the truth about it. Yet we can never be sure to achieve that aim. This uncertainty can partly be overcome, however, by inserting a meaning into other equations and then checking whether the results of these equations are in accordance with that meaning. We can thus make an assumption about the meaning of one dream, and then see whether this attribution of a meaning also explains another one, that is, if it is of more general significance. We can also make control tests with the help of *dream series*. I would actually prefer to deal with children's dreams in dream series because when we investigate dreams in series, we most often find confirmation or corrections of our original assumptions in the following dreams. In dream series, the dreams are connected to one another in a meaningful way, as if they tried to give expression to a central content from ever-varying angles. To touch this central core is to find the key to the explanation of the individual dreams. It is not always so easy, however, to delimit a dream series. It is a kind of monologue taking place under the cover of consciousness. This monologue is heard, so to speak, in the dream, and sinks down during the periods when we are awake. But in a way the monologue never ends. We are quite probably dreaming all the time, but consciousness makes so much noise that we no longer hear the dream when awake. If we succeeded in making a complete list [of the unconscious processes], we could see that the whole describes a certain line. It is a very difficult task when done thoroughly.

The way we explain dreams is primarily a *causal* one. We are inclined to explain nature in such a way. Here this method meets enormous difficulties, however, because we can explain in a strictly causal way only when the necessity of a correlation between cause and effect can be proven. But this clear relation can be found, above all, in so-called inanimate nature. Whenever phenomena can be isolated and subjected to experiments, when, in other words, uniform conditions can be established, strict attributions of cause and effect can be made. In the case of biological phenomena, however, we are hardly able to ascertain a disposition that would lead, of necessity, to certain effects. For here we are facing such complex material, such a di-

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versity and complexity of conditions, that no *unequivocal* causal connections can be maintained. Here the term *conditional* is much more appropriate, that is, such and such conditions can lead to such and such effects. It is an attempt to replace strict causality with an interwoven action of conditions, to extend the unequivocal connection between cause and effect with a connection open to many interpretations. Thus causality as such is not abolished, but only adapted to the multilayered material of life. We have to take into account that the psyche, like all biological phenomena, is of a goal-oriented, purposive nature. This does not at all contradict the previously mentioned opinion that the dream is something unintentional. There we laid stress on the fact that natural phenomena occur unconsciously, independent of consciousness. This does not preclude the developing forms of the psyche from being determined by *unconscious purposiveness*. We cannot but assume that the fundamental nature has always been there already, and that everything that occurs is only a purposive unfolding of this primal disposition. Even things that seem to be completely unpurposive in the psychical or biological fields can be examined as to their possible purposiveness. Ancient medicine, for instance, thought that fever is, in all circumstances, a symptom of illness to be fought against. Modern medicine knows that it is a complicated and purposive defense phenomenon, and not the *noxa* that causes the illness. In working with dreams, too, we have always to keep in mind this aspect of inner purposiveness of what is happening. In this sense, we may talk about the *unconscious goal orientation* of the dream process, in noting that these are not conscious goals, not intentions like those of consciousness, but purposive automatisms that, like cell reactions, cannot be other than purposive.



The dream is no unequivocal phenomenon. There are several possibilities of giving a meaning to a dream. I would like to suggest to you four definitions, which are more or less an extract of the various meanings I have come across that dreams can have.

1. The dream is the unconscious reaction to a *conscious situation*. A certain conscious situation is followed by a reaction of the uncon-

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scious in the form of a dream, whose elements point clearly, whether in a complementary or a compensatory way, to the impression received during the day. It is immediately obvious that this dream would never have come into being without the particular impression of the previous day.

2. The dream depicts a situation that originated in a *conflict* between consciousness and the unconscious. In this case, there is no conscious situation that would have provoked, more or less without doubt, a particular dream, but here we are dealing with a certain spontaneity of the unconscious. To a certain conscious situation the unconscious adds another one, which is so different from the conscious situation that a conflict between them arises.
3. The dream represents that tendency of the unconscious that aims at a *change of the conscious attitude*. In this case, the counterposition raised by the unconscious is stronger than the conscious position: the dream represents a gradient from the unconscious to consciousness. These are very significant dreams. Someone with a certain attitude can be completely changed by them.
4. The dream depicts unconscious processes showing *no relation* to the conscious situation. Dreams of this kind are very strange and often very hard to interpret because of their peculiar character. The dreamer is then exceedingly astonished at why he is dreaming this, because not even a conditional connection can be made out. It is a spontaneous product of the unconscious, which carries the whole activity and weight of the meaning. These are dreams of an overwhelming nature. They are the ones called “great dreams” by the primitives. They are like an oracle, “*somnia a deo missa*.”² They are experienced as illumination.

Dreams of this last kind also appear before the breakout of mental illness or of severe neuroses, in which suddenly a content breaks through by which the dreamer is deeply impressed, even if he does not understand it. I remember such a case from before the [First] World War:

² Latin: “Dreams sent by God” (ed.).

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I was visited by an old man, a professor of canon law at a Catholic university. He made a dignified impression, like the old Mommsen.³ He had business to do with me and, when this had been dealt with, said to me, “I have heard that you are also interested in dreams?” I told him, “This is part of my business.” I sensed that his soul was consumed by a dream, which he then actually recounted. He had had this dream many years before, and it preoccupied him again and again.

He is on a mountain-pass road, winding along a precipice. Below there is a canyon. The road is secured against the canyon by a wall. The wall is made of Parian marble⁴ with its antique yellowish tinge, as he notices at once. At this moment he sees a strange figure dancing downward on the wall, a naked woman with the legs of a chamois, a “fauna.” She then jumps down into the precipice and disappears. Then he awakens.

This dream preoccupied him immensely. He had already told it to many people.



Another dream is from a thirty-year-old man, who consulted me because of neurasthenia, which had set in quite suddenly; he had been a prince’s tutor and had had a nervous breakdown in this hard duty. I was intrigued by the fact that this neurasthenia—usually already present before in these cases, and then only getting worse over time—should have set in so suddenly. I asked him what happened at the time when he got the vertigo and the pains. At first he said that nothing special had occurred. I asked him about his dreams during that period. Then it surfaced that he had had a strange dream, whereupon the illness broke out.

He is going for a walk on a dune and suddenly discovers black shards on the ground. He lifts them; they are prehistoric pieces. He goes home,

³ Theodor Mommsen (1817–1903), influential German historian and jurist, winner of the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1902, and author of *Römische Geschichte* [*Roman History*] and *Römisches Staatsrecht* [*Roman Constitutional Law*] (ed. and trans.).

⁴ Páros, island in the Aegean Sea, famous in ancient Greece for its semitransparent marble used for sculpture (trans.).

fetches a spade, begins to dig up the ground, and discovers a whole prehistoric settlement, weapons and tools, stone axes, and so on. He is immensely fascinated and awakens sweating with excitement.

The dream recurred, and then the patient broke down. He was a young Swiss.

In psychotherapeutic treatment, certain elements can appear already weeks or months or years earlier, not yet connected at all to consciousness; these are direct products of the unconscious.

As you notice, I differentiate dream processes according to how the reactions of the unconscious stand in relation to the conscious situation. One can detect the most various transitions, from a reaction of the unconscious determined by the elements of consciousness, to a spontaneous manifestation of the unconscious. In the latter case, the unconscious proves to be a creative activity, in which it lets contents ascend into consciousness that have not yet been present there.

One usually assumes that the content of the dream stands in relation to consciousness, assuming that, for instance, conscious psychological contents are associatively linked to unconscious ones. This is what gave rise to the theory that the dream has to be explained solely out of consciousness, and that the unconscious as such is a derivative of consciousness. But this is not so; actually, the exact opposite is the case: *the unconscious is older than consciousness*. Primitive man lives to a great extent in unconsciousness, and we too, by the way, spend a third of our lives in the unconscious: we dream or doze. The unconscious is what is originally given, from which consciousness rises anew again and again. Consciousness, being conscious,⁵ is work that exhausts us. One is able to concentrate only for a relatively short time, therefore, only to fall back into the unconscious state again; one lapses into dreams or unintentional associating. It is, in Faust's words: "Formation, Transformation, / Eternal minds in eternal recreation."⁶ Thus there are dreams in whose contents no relation to con-

⁵ In the original: *Bewußt-Sein*, a play on "consciousness" (*Bewußtsein*) and "being conscious" (*bewußt sein*) (trans.).

⁶ Goethe, *Faust* 2, lines 6287–88 (trans.).

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sciousness can be detected, and whose whole activity is located in the unconscious. Everything—the motive of the dream and its activity—springs from the unconscious and cannot be derived from consciousness. When you want to “force” such a dream and make it into a derivative of consciousness, you simply violate the dreaming of the dream, resulting in complete nonsense.

Dream processes follow from several causes and conditions. There are about five different possible sources:

1. They can stem from *somatic sources*: bodily perceptions, states of illness, or uncomfortable body postures. They can be bodily phenomena that, for their part, are caused themselves by quite unconscious psychical processes. The ancient dream interpreters made a great deal of the somatic source of stimuli, and this explanation is still frequently found today. Experimental psychology still takes the view that dreams always have to originate in something somatic. This is the well-known view of the dream: one ate too much before going to bed, lay on one’s back or on one’s belly, and therefore had that dream.
2. Other *physical stimuli*, not from one’s own body but from the environment, can have effects on the dream: sounds, stimuli from light, coldness, or warmth.

I would like to give you an example from the French literature: Someone is dreaming: *He is in the French Revolution. He is persecuted and finally guillotined. He awakes when the blade is sliding down.* This is when a part of the frame of the canopy fell on his neck. So he must have dreamed the whole dream at the moment when the frame went down.

Examples of this kind have often led to the opinion that such a dream, in which one has a clear sense of time, takes place in a very short time-span.

I remember, for instance, such a dream from my own adolescence. As a university student I had to get up at half past five in the morning, because the botany lecture started at seven o’clock. This was

very tough for me. I always had to be awakened; the maid had to pound at the door until I finally woke up. So, once I had a very detailed dream.

"I was reading the newspaper. It said that a certain tension between Switzerland and foreign countries had arisen. Then many people came and discussed the political situation; then there came another newspaper, and again it contained new telegrams and new articles. Many people got excited. Again there were discussions and scenes in the streets, and eventually mobilization: soldiers, artillery. Canons were fired—now the war had broken out"—but it was the knocking on the door. I had the clear impression that the dream had lasted for a very long time and come to a climax with the knocking.

As evidence for the view that dreams have no temporal dimension but take place only at the moment of the acoustic stimulus, it might be helpful to quote the extremely complex perceptions of a person at the moment of a fall.

During the few seconds of his fall in the mountains, the well-known Swiss geologist Heim⁷ saw his whole life in review.

The same is told in the story of a French admiral. He fell into the water and nearly drowned. In this short moment, the images of his whole life passed before his eyes.

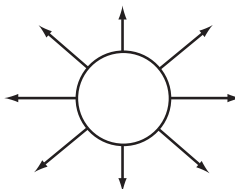
It has to be stressed, however, that such moments are of an immense intensity. You can have an *overall view* in them that is not successive at all. During sleep there is no such intensity. That is the problem. That is why such cases give no explanation for the lack of a temporal dimension in dreams.

To be frank, I always think of another possibility, which is of course equally quixotic: that there is something going on in the realm of the unconscious with the *notion of time*, that time comes apart a little in the unconscious, that is, the unconscious always remains beside the passing of time and perceives things that do not yet exist. In the un-

⁷ Albert Heim (1849–1937), Swiss geologist, known for his studies of the Swiss Alps, and professor at the University of Zurich (ed. and trans.).

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conscious, everything is already there from the beginning. So, for example, one often dreams of a motif that plays a role only the next day or even later. The unconscious does not care about our time or the causal interrelation of things. This can also be observed in dream series. The series does not form a chronological, consecutive order in the sense of our temporal order. That is why it is so difficult to tell what comes first and what later. If one tried to characterize the nature of dreams, one could say that they do not form a chronological series as in a b c d, with b following from a, and c from b. We rather have to suppose an unrecognizable center from which the dreams emanate. This idea can be illustrated as in the figure.



Because dreams enter into consciousness *one after the other*, we conceive them with the help of the temporal category and relate them to one another in a causal way. It cannot be excluded, however, that the true order of the first dream enters into consciousness only much later. The seemingly chronological series is, as it were, not the true series. If we conceive of it this way, we make a concession to our concept of time. There are dream sequels into which another motif suddenly inserts itself, only to be left later to make room for an earlier motif. The actual arrangement of dreams is a radial one: the dreams radiate from a center, and are only later subjected to the influence of our time. In the final analysis, they are arranged around a *center of meaning*.

In the unconscious we have, after all, to reckon with other categories than in consciousness; this is similar to quantum physics, where facts are altered by the act of observation, as, for example, in the observation of the atomic nucleus. It seems that difficult laws apply in the microphysical world of the atom than in the macrophysical world. In this respect, there is a certain parallelism between

the unconscious and the microphysical world. The unconscious could be compared to the atomic nucleus.

In everyday life, too, it can be observed how the unconscious *anticipates* things. Often these are quite harmless things without any further importance, as for instance the following phenomena: you walk on the street and believe you see an acquaintance. It is not he, but later he does come by. Such strange “near-miss perceptions” are very frequent. But they are so insignificant and carry so little weight that one usually overlooks them, thinking, “Such a coincidence!” But there are also quite fabulous examples.

I have experienced such an example with a friend at the university. He was a natural scientist. His father had promised him a trip to Spain if he did well on an exam. Right before the exam he had a dream that he told me on the spot.

He is in a Spanish town and follows a street to a square into which several streets lead, and which is defined by a cathedral. He strolls across the square and turns right, as he first wants to have a look at the cathedral from the side. As he is turning into that street, a carriage with two Isabella horses is coming. Then he wakes up.

The dream made such an impression on him, he told me, because the image was of such great beauty and brilliance.

Three weeks later, after his exam, he traveled to Spain. From there I received the news that the dream had come true. In a Spanish town he came to such a square. At once he remembered the dream, and said to himself: “Now, if the horses in the side street also came true!” He went into the side street—and the horses were there! He was an absolutely reliable man, is now in a position in the civil service, and was otherwise never known for such things but, on the contrary, for his proverbial dryness and sobriety. I have not heard anything similar from him again.

This case is not exceptional. There are numerous experiences of this kind. When you treat many patients with neuroses, you can frequently make such observations; over time you realize their typical

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character and can alert people beforehand that something will happen. In these cases I usually say, “Attention now, something’s going to happen!” The following dream is an example:

A female patient of middle age. For some time, her dreams dealt with a certain problem. Suddenly there comes a dream, with no connection to anything else:

*She was alone in a house. Evening fell. She went through the house to close all windows. Then she remembered a back door that she also had to lock. She went to the door and saw that it had no lock. She wondered what to do and started to look for pieces of furniture or boxes to put in front of the door. While she was doing this, it grew ever darker, ever more uncanny. All of a sudden the door flew open, and in shot a black bullet, right into the middle of her body. She woke up with a scream.*⁸

It was the house of an aunt living in America. She had been there once, twenty years earlier. After a quarrel, the family was completely torn apart, and with this aunt in particular she was on absolutely bad terms. She had not seen her for twenty years nor kept in touch with her at all. She did not know if that aunt still lived in that house or, for that matter, if she was still alive. I inquired of the patient’s sister about the correctness of this information, and she corroborated it. I told the patient to write up this dream and its date. Three weeks later a letter arrived from America saying that this aunt had died. And she had died on the very day on which the patient had had that dream. This is a typical dream.

Such effects—of whatever kind—often have the character of shots. I remind you of the famous “witches’ shot.”⁹ The same ideas can be found among the North American Indians: the medicine man can “shoot” you with something—for example, a so-called icicle—to make you ill. Similar ideas are found in an English book about the mystic Anna Kingsford.¹⁰ She believed that she had the same capa-

⁸ Jung quoted this dream also in his review of the work of Macrobius; see volume 2 of the English edition (ed.).

⁹ *Hexenschuß* = literally, “witch’s shot”; a sudden onset of lumbago (trans.).

¹⁰ Edward Maitland, *Anna Kingsford: Her Life, Letters, Diary and Work*.

bilities and would be able to achieve such effects. The yogis in Tibet are said to be able to exert evil influence on others.¹¹ What they send out is of an oblong shape. It is beyond our knowledge what is at work here, but the *consensus gentium* speaks of it.¹² The Tibetans certainly know nothing about English literature, nor my patient anything about Tibet. But there must exist a *common source* for this assumption, and it must lie in a peculiar psychical factor that we cannot explain for the time being. I am all against superciliously ascending the throne of scepticism and declaring it a swindle. What interests me is that everywhere these things are said to be so. This idea is as common and widespread as, for instance, the one that the dead do not know they are dead, and have to be enlightened about it to find rest. Independent of one another, these ideas are found among spiritualists and primitives, and in Tibetan texts. In the *Bardo Thödol* you find an instruction concerning how to enlighten the dead person that he is really dead.¹³ The interesting question here is: How can this be explained? Which primal factors are in existence here to which these statements refer?

3. Now there are not only physical events that cause dreams, but also psychical ones. It happens that certain *psychical occurrences in the environment* are perceived by the unconscious.

In my collection of dreams there is a case in which a child between the ages of three and four dreams that two angels are coming, are picking up something from the ground, and are sending it up to heaven.

Another child dreams that the mother wants to kill herself. Crying, the child runs into the room of the mother, who is already awake; she is just on the point of committing suicide.

¹¹ Tibetan parallel of the icicles, in Arthur Avalon, *Shri-Chakra-Sambhâra Tantra: A Buddhist Tantra*.

¹² In the original: *spricht davon*; probably an error for *spricht dafür* = speaks in favor of it (trans.).

¹³ *The Tibetan Book of the Dead: Introduction and Psychological Commentary to the Bardo Thödol* by C. G. Jung. Also in C. G. Jung, *Psychology and Religion: West and East*, CW 11, §§ 831ff (ed.).

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In this way, important psychical occurrences in the environment can be perceived. Moods and secrets, too, can actually be “scented” unconsciously. In these instances, one does not know at all how the unconscious comes to perceive this. The strange thing is that these are not always impressive cases at all, as in the dream of the mother’s suicide, but sometimes quite insignificant ones. And we can understand even less how one can “scent” completely insignificant things. Let me give you an example of this, too:

It is the case of a businessman who was, however, interested in telepathic phenomena. He very much wanted to experience something himself. Once he sat in his office; it was three o’clock in the afternoon, and he had dozed off. He saw the postman pull the bell of his house—he lived in the suburbs and his office was in the city—and saw how his maid opened the door and took a package of newspapers and letters from the postman. There was a yellow letter lying on the package. He saw very clearly how big it was, and what it looked like. He came to with the feeling of having slept a bit. Then he suddenly thought: “This was a vision!” He went home at four o’clock and inquired about the letters. The package, as he had seen it, lay on the bureau in the hallway outside, but there was no yellow letter on it. He thought he had drawn a blank. Fourteen days later, the servant came with a yellow letter. It had fallen behind the bureau. He then opened the letter, thinking it contained heaven knows what. But it was a business pamphlet, something completely insignificant!

In my experience I have often come across such cases. The silliest things can enter into dreams and be foreseen, and the identity cannot be disputed at all. This happens far too often to be ignored. There are certainly “illegitimate” sources of dreams. There are things one should not know or is not supposed to know, and yet one does know them, as if one had a nose going through walls. It seeps into one through the atmosphere.

I had a colleague who was somehow peculiar, but had interesting ideas. He lived in a house in the countryside, with his wife, two children, and a maidservant. He wrote down all dreams dreamed in his

house, also those of patients he had accommodated there. It was simply astonishing how the patients' problems appeared in the dreams of the servant, the children, and the wife.

Such phenomena are experienced not only in dreams, but also in society: someone enters the room, for example, and suddenly there is a chill everywhere. Something emanated from this person, one does not know what.

4. Until now, we have mentioned somatic sources, and physical and psychical events in the environment as causes of the dream processes. Now *past events* can also come into dreams. Should you come across this you will have to take it seriously. When a historical name of possible significance appears in dreams, I am in the habit of looking up what the name stands for in reality. I check what person is meant by it, and what his environment was, for in this way the dream can be explained.

Strangely enough, I had such a case only today. A lady, having settled too much in the upper stories, living too much in the head, and on a poor footing with the underworld, recounts the following dream:

There was a very dangerous-looking circle of lions. In the middle there was a pit that was filled with something hot. She knew that she had to go down into the pit and dive into it. So she went in and was somehow burned in the fire. Just one shoulder of her jutted out. I pressed her down and said: "Not out, but through it!"

This dream illustrates very clearly the problem that she had always evaded. Together with the dream, she mentioned a fragment in which St. Eustache was said to be her patron saint. The legend of St. Eustache indeed fits nicely: Eustache and his family had converted to Christianity. He died the martyr's death around A.D. 118, together with his family. He was thrown to the *lions*. The lions, however, did not want to devour the holy family. So they heated a brazen bull until it was red hot, and *roasted* them to death in it. This is something the patient did not know.

The occurrence of these past events in dreams is extremely hard

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to explain. It is just as if this patient had hunted out the calendar of saints in my library. It is also possible, however, that this is a case of cryptomnesia,¹⁴ that the patient had in fact read the legend and does not know it any longer. There are famous instances of such cryptomnesias. We will come back to this later. For the moment we are interested only in occurrences in which it can be proven that one had not read something specific, because one never came near these matters. These cases exist, and it is always worth checking in the books to become oriented about its objective content. A particularly impressive case, which I proved, was that of a mentally ill person who produced a symbolic connection *before* the text of a Greek papyrus had been deciphered.¹⁵ This sounds miraculous indeed, but we have to get used to the idea that such things exist, that elements which in some strange way or other correspond to historical facts can be reproduced from the unconscious. The explanation is to be found in the fact that these are *archetypal* contents. It belongs to the nature of the archetype that it is capable of reproducing again exactly the same images in an identical way. This is often denied, but mostly by people who are not familiar with the matter at all and are in no way able to give an explanation. Ignorance makes it easy to deny these things, as you can see from the following two examples:

When an agent of Edison first presented the latter's phonograph in the Académie in Paris, a professor of physics is said to have taken him by the throat and called him a "ventriloquist."

Galileo challenged his adversaries to look through the telescope and to convince themselves of the existence of Jupiter's satellites. But they didn't want to look!

At a Later Session [8 November 1938]

Professor Jung: Last time we left off at a discussion of the various *causes of the dream processes*. A further group of causes can be found in dreams that, although having originally had a connection with

¹⁴ The unconscious remembering of a fact that, for instance, one had once read, but then forgotten again (cf. below). See also Jung's paper "Cryptomnesia" (CW 1) (ed.).

¹⁵ See Jung, *Symbols of Transformation* (CW 5, § 151), and *The Structure and Dynamics of the Psyche* (CW 8, §§ 317–18) (ed.).

consciousness, have long lost it, so that it seems as if this connection never existed.

Let us turn to these *contents* that have *lost the connection to consciousness*. Therefore, the contents of these dreams cannot be reproduced. Persons, faces, situations, buildings, parts of buildings, furniture, or fixtures can appear that were once conscious in childhood, but have fallen into complete oblivion over the decades.

I remember such a dream that I had years ago. I saw the face of a man. After I reflected for a long time, there came a memory from my earliest youth, when I was about ten years old. It was of our neighbor, a little peasant, long since under the grass. I had completely forgotten his face. In this dream, it emerged again in its original freshness. Consciously, I would not have been able to reproduce it. And when, two days later, I recounted that dream, I was again completely unable to reproduce that face. It had vanished again. The remembered image had been too weak.

In dreams, therefore, *cryptomnesias* may appear, that is, impressions, elements, thoughts, a piece of knowledge that the dreamer once had, which then vanishes completely and cannot be reproduced, until it suddenly reemerges in its original form on some particular occasion.

I found such a cryptomnesia in Nietzsche.¹⁶ The passage in *Zarathustra* on the descent into the underworld, in which the captain goes ashore to shoot rabbits, caught my attention.¹⁷

I asked Mrs. Förster-Nietzsche, the only person able to supply information on the childhood of her brother, if Nietzsche had not taken over this motif from the *Blätter aus Prevorst* by Justinus Kerner, where it is actually found. She told me that he definitely had read this book with her before his eleventh year in the library of their grandfather.

Théodore Flournoy, the well-known psychologist and philosopher from Geneva, provided evidence of similar cases in his work, *From*

¹⁶ A detailed description of this example is in Jung, *Psychiatric Studies* (CW 1, §§ 180ff), and in *The Symbolic Life* (CW 8, §§ 454ff) (ed.).

¹⁷ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, part 2, "Of Great Events."

ON THE METHOD OF DREAM INTERPRETATION

environment. At the age of seven she had the second impressive dream:

She has to wash white linen, in a tub filled with blood.

Here you have the red color again. From the age of seven there was a stereotypically recurring anxiety dream:

She is in a kind of hall in a private house. There is a small door on the side that has to be passed quickly. This door has to be avoided. She knows, however, that she actually has to enter there and descend a staircase into a dark basement.

Then, in a dream, it really happens: *She is on the stairs and wants to go down. Anxiety seizes her. Vaguely, she sees a ghost and wakes up with a scream of anxiety.*

She was a person leading a spiritual existence; she also never married. Only at the age of forty-five did she become aware of the fact that she had something called sexuality. It did not exist before; she was completely unconscious of it. She only became aware of it when she had to be treated for having been afflicted with a severe neurosis.

A persecutory dream always means: this wants to come to me. When you dream of a savage bull, or a lion, or a wolf pursuing you, this means: it wants to come to you. You would like to split it off, you experience it as something alien—but it just becomes all the more dangerous. The urge of what had been split off to unite with you becomes all the stronger. The best stance would be: “Please, come and devour me!” Working with such a dream in analysis means to familiarize people with the thought that they should by no means resist when this element faces them. The Other within us becomes a bear, a lion, because we made it into that. Once we accept this, it becomes something else. That’s why Faust says: “So this, then, was the kernel of the brute!”¹⁹ It is his devil, Mephistopheles. Until that moment, Faust was split off from it, unconscious of it. When the situation becomes unbearable, he is driven toward suicide. He has to descend in order to find his shadow. He has to turn around once to look at himself from the other side.

¹⁹ Goethe, *Faust I*, “Faust’s Study I,” verse 1323 (trans.).

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This patient also had the task of realizing that she was split off from her underworld. For one thing, she had to face the factuality of blood, for “Blood is a quite peculiar juice.”²⁰ It is the instinctual substance, what is alive in man. It expresses fire and passion. The anxiety dream clearly pointed to this; it was like an admonition: “Go down the stairs now and take a look at what’s there!” Had she listened to this, she would have encountered the other side. She would have had to say to the ghost: “Oh here you are, come and show yourself!” And with this she would have gained a chance to approach her totality.

Now we have difficulty in assuming that a four-year-old child is already familiar with such a problem. This is hardly possible. After all, we cannot credit a child with the psychology of an adult. Strangely enough, however, unconsciously the child already has all the psychology of an adult. As it is, from birth onward—one could even say already from before birth—the individual is what it will be. In the disposition, the basic blueprint is already there very early. Such early dreams come out of the totality of the personality, and that is why they allow us to see a great deal of what we later miss in it. Later, life forces us to make one-sided differentiations. But that is why we get lost to ourselves and have to learn, again, to find ourselves. When you are whole, you have discovered yourself once again, and you know what you have been all the time. I would like to tell you another dream of a child:

It is the dream of a girl between the ages of three and four, recurring three times during that year and staying burned into her memory ever since:

A long tail of a comet swishes over the Earth; the Earth catches fire, and people perish in that fire. The child then hears the terrible cries of the people and awakens from them.

This is one of those dreams called *cosmic childhood dreams*. Such dreams are like alien phenomena, leaving one perplexed for the moment. From where does the child have the idea of the end of mankind in a firebrand? It is a completely *archaic* image: the terminal fire of the

²⁰ Goethe, *Faust I*, “Faust’s Study 2,” verse 1740 (trans.).

world that destroys the world. What does it mean that the little child produces such an image? Actually this can't be interpreted at all. An ancient dream reader would have said: "This child has a special destiny, one day these cosmic ties will make themselves felt." When adult persons had such dreams in antiquity, in Athens they gave notice of them to the Aeropagus, and in Rome to the Senate. Primitive men, too, sat together to listen to those dreams, because everybody felt that they were of general significance.

We, too, have to try to grasp such a dream, in the first instance, with regard to its *general* significance. It is as if the dreamer should be prepared for a collective part. These persons find their destiny in the collective. Such a collective role bodes ill for a happy family life. One is torn apart by the collective destiny.

The six points mentioned earlier are the most essential causes and conditions of dream processes.



The dream is *never* a mere repetition of previous experiences, with only *one* specific exception: shock or shell shock dreams, which sometimes are completely identical repetitions of reality. That, in fact, is a proof of the traumatic effect. The shock can no longer be *psychified*. This can be seen especially clearly in healing processes in which the psyche tries to translate the shock into a psychical anxiety situation, as in the following example:

Somebody dreams that it is evening. He is sitting in his room and feels that something is going on outside. He does not know what. Yet it seems that wild beasts are nearby. He looks out the window and sees that in fact there are lions outside. He shuts all the doors and windows. But the lions come into the house and burst the doors open with a bang. But that's when the grenades exploded again!

The attempt of the unconscious to integrate this shock psychically has failed, and the original shock breaks through. The reaction of shell-shocked patients is such that a knock, or anything reminiscent of a shot or an explosion, suffices to trigger nervous attacks. The attempt to transform a shock into a psychical situation that may grad-

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ually be mastered can also succeed toward the end of a treatment, however, as I have observed myself in a series of dreams of an English officer. In this man's dreams, the explosion of the grenade changed into lions and other dangers that he was then able to tackle. The shock was, so to speak, absorbed. In this way, the dreamer was able to master the effect of the shock as a psychical experience. Any time we are confronted with a shock in its "raw," not yet psychical, form, our psychical means are not sufficient to overcome it. We are not able, for example, to cope with a physical injury or a physical infection [directly] by psychical means. We can only psychically influence matters that are themselves of a psychical nature. It also seems that a shell shock is so hard to cure because in most cases it is accompanied by heavy, bodily shocks that probably cause very fine disturbances of a nonpsychical nature in the nervous system.

All other dreams are never exact repetitions of events of the previous day. It is true that there are dreams that repeat nearly identically one or another event of the previous day; if the dream is precisely recorded and compared with reality, however, differences will show.

I had a patient who always denied that dreams were of psychological significance. She held that they were only a copy of the events of the previous day. One day she triumphantly announced that she had dreamed an exact repetition of an event the day before: that day she had been at the dentist's offices. He had inserted a mirror into her mouth and had made a remark that I do not want to repeat. The dream would have brought an exact repetition of that situation. When I questioned her closely, however, it became clear that she went upstairs to the dentist's, as in reality, but the doorplate was in another place. I went on asking: "Well, what did the door look like?" She answered: "Like yours."

It has to be remarked that I lived at the Burghölzli at that time!²¹ It continued in that vein until, regarding the dentist, the detail surfaced that in the dream he was dressed in a nightshirt! Well, you can picture yourselves the continuation of the dream!

²¹ Between 1900 and 1909, C. G. Jung worked as an assistant, doctor, and head physician under Eugen Bleuler at the Burghölzli, the psychiatric clinic of the University of Zurich (ed.).

She had the dream because the dentist's remark had been highly suggestive, although neither he nor she had noticed it. Her unconscious did notice it, however, and linked it with the erotic transference onto me in the dream. The dream wanted to rub this transference in.

In my experience, this example comes nearest to a verbally repeated event of the previous day. I have never seen a dream that really repeated an event of the day before. There are only *approximate* repetitions. Here is another example:

A patient happened to see a car run over a child. At night he dreamed of it. Here, too, the dream was not completely identical: the child lay on the other side, wore different clothes, and different people were there. The dreamer himself also played a different role.

In this case, too, the dream simply used a situation of the previous day to give expression to an important situation of the dreamer: he runs over his own child. He does not want to see where he himself is infantile. The dream then tells him: "See, that's how the child is run over."

You remember that I remarked at the beginning that we should have a look at dreams from the *causal* point of view. True, we do not know if causality exists, but if we want to work scientifically it is advisable to make the hypothesis that natural processes are not singular events randomly following each other, but that there are causal connections between them. We further proceeded from the hypothesis that the psyche is of a *purposive* nature, shown in its unconscious orientation toward a goal. This hypothesis, too, proved to be important. For working with the dream process there follows the presupposition that we conceive of dreams as purposive and *meaningful causal connections*. This is crucial for an understanding of dreams.

Freud was the first to approach dreams with the conviction that their contents represent meaningful causal connections. He did away with the scientific superstition that the dream is a random series of nonsense and, therefore, could not be explained. But, as always happens when a hypothesis can be applied successfully, a need instantly

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arises to turn it into a *theory*. This is what Freud was carried away into, insofar as he elevated a point of view, which can in fact be applied to dreams, into a theory.

Freud saw dreams above all as wish fulfillments. The most transparent cases are these: you have been fasting, are hungry, and dream of an opulent, fabulous meal; or you are thirsty and dream of wonderful water or a glass of beer. These dreams stem from somatic sources, and can suitably be explained as wish fulfillments. Now Freud soon came across dreams that could not readily be explained as wish fulfillments. Freud then assumed that these were concealed wish fulfillments, meaning that for one reason or another wish fulfillment must not take place. It follows that there must be a censor. Who is that censor? It can't possibly be consciousness itself! Freud says: it is the existing *rest of consciousness* that is exercising the censorship. So one develops a game with oneself by presenting a wish to oneself, but in disguising it in such a way as not to recognize it. One tells oneself a fabricated story in order to disguise to oneself what one really wants. Thus the unconscious is credited with quite some achievement, for what creates the dream would have to proceed with utmost deceitfulness. First, it knows the wish to which I do not own up, second, it would be able, if it wanted, to represent it directly—but it wants to keep it a secret from me and distorts it. That would actually have to be a little goblin, an evil spirit, saying: "I know perfectly well what you have in mind, but I won't tell you; instead I somehow distort it so that you don't find out." Why, then, does the dream disguise the wish? Freud says: so that sleep is not disturbed. As dreams would wake us up, being so incompatible with our consciousness, the censor benevolently disguises them. This assumption, however, runs counter to the experience that nothing disturbs sleep more than dreams, like, for instance, anxiety dreams, which interrupt sleep and make sleep impossible for hours. You see into what difficulties you run when you explain exclusively on the basis of the *conscious* side. Freud assumes a wish of which I am not conscious. Here the question cannot be evaded: *Who* has this wish? And then our conclusion has to be: the unconscious. But, if these are wishes of the unconscious, where are they?

It was these difficulties that induced me to leave aside, for the time being, all theory and approach dreams without preconceptions, in order to see how they really function. To this end I began by using Freud's technique, *free association*, and made the following observation: When you set a person the task of associating freely, you will uncover his *complexes*, but you will not know if these complexes were also contained in the point of departure, the dream. For example, you dream of a lion and associate about it. In this process it turns out that the lion is a greedy animal. It comes to your mind that you yourself are greedy and desirous and—already you are right within the complex. Freud concludes that the complex must therefore be contained in the dream, too. For him, dreams are an improper expression of the complex, of some desirous fantasy, power, or sexuality. In logic, this reductive explanation is called "*reductio in primam figuram*."²²

But assume you are traveling on a Russian or Indian railway, seeing inscriptions you cannot read. When you start to associate freely, you will eventually arrive at your complexes. So you can arrive at your complexes *in whatever way*, because they are what is attractive and attracts everything. The following happens: in free association, the chain of associations leads to some complex. This happens quite naturally and, so to speak, without inhibition; you just "fall into" the complex. So, if you discover a complex by free association, this does not necessarily mean that this complex is also contained in your dream image. I concluded that this method is not applicable because, although the person's complexes are invariably arrived at, this does not say that exactly these complexes are contained in the dream. It could even be the case that the unconscious had to free itself of precisely these complexes to be able to deal with them! Maybe just this is the achievement of the unconscious! The complexes are, after all, the true troublemakers, and it is quite possible that the unconscious itself stresses the *natural* functioning, and tries to lead us out of that mousetrap of complexes. Because the complex is a mousetrap. For instance, you can talk quite sensibly with a person. The moment you touch upon his complex—it's all over! He is victim to his "silly" ideas

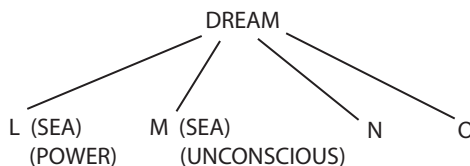
²² Latin, "reduction to the original image or schema" (ed.).

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and turns around in circles. The complexes inhibit and sterilize man and make him a monomaniac. The assumption suggests itself that Nature itself tries to lead one out of this circle.

Thus, to get to the real meaning of the dream, I tried to dissolve the dream, to concentrate on the original image, and to collect associations to it from all sides. I thus proceed *concentrically*, instead of by free association that sort of zigzags away from the dream image and lands in some place or another. So the question to the dreamer is: "What comes to mind about X, what do you think of it? And what else comes to mind about X?" Whereas the question in free association is: "What comes to mind about X? And then? And then?" And so on. In this way, the associations are about *other associations*, instead of about X. In contrast to this method, I stay with the original image of X. I call this method, in opposition to the "*reductio in primam figuram*," *amplificatio*, that is, amplification. In doing this, I proceed from the very simple principle that I understand nothing of the dream, do not know what it means, and do not conceive an idea of how the dream image is embedded in each person's mind. I amplify an existing image until it becomes visible.

Amplification must be carried through with all the elements, because the dream consists of a number of them. Let us assume the first dream element to be "lion." I start by noting the associations to it, and then I insert the found expression in place of the dream element. When, for instance, the "lion" amounts to "greed for power" in the dreamer or another person, I put "power" instead of "lion" in parentheses. In the same way I deal with the other elements. In the end, we see what the whole sentence means [as shown in the diagram].



Thus, we grasp the real meaning of the phenomenon. We can see through the dream by way of questioning, by *personal amplification*. We have to have the context of an image to understand what the

dream image stands for. In this way, we grasp the full range of meaning of the dream image. Only after many experiences are we perhaps able to advance a theory on the coming into being, and the fundamental meaning, of dreams.

In applying this technique of personal amplification, we are in the first place able to find the subjective meaning of a dream. Now we have experienced that a great number of dream images are not of an individual, but of a *collective* nature.²³ We do not have to look far to find such universal images. They are already found in language, not to mention those that probably rest at the bottom of our souls. So when a woman says about another that she is a snake, everybody knows what that means; or when a man is said to be a sly fox, the picture is equally clear. Thus, we may perhaps interpret the “lion” also according to common usage: the “lion” is the king of the animals, it is “power,” and we do not go astray in assuming that this is what is meant when someone dreams of a lion, even if the dream has a personal point. This enables us to translate dreams also without associations, for we possess, in our figures of speech, a whole arsenal of symbols. You can also dream those figures of speech directly, for example, that someone climbs up your back (“You can step on my back!”).²⁴ So if we have such general images in our language, it is quite possible that we are able to understand dreams at least in a *general* way, even without associations.

This is essential in the case of dreams of an impersonal nature, where collective images come to the foreground, and for which we have few associations or none at all. This includes, as mentioned in my introduction, children’s dreams, for which it is very hard to get associations. Adults, too, often have dreams to which there are no associations, so that we cannot see what the context of the dream image is. In most cases these are of such a strange nature that their meaning can be brought to light only with the greatest difficulty.

²³ C. G. Jung developed the notion of the collective unconscious in his book *Transformations and Symbols of the Libido*; see also CW 5, preface to the 2nd and 4th editions (ed.).

²⁴ Original: *Sie können mir auf den Buckel steigen!*, roughly: “No way, go to blazes!” An analogous figure of speech in both German and English would be, *einen breiten Buckel haben* = to have a broad back (trans.).

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Dreams of that kind always contain a piece of mythology that cannot be interpreted by mere questioning and personal amplification. Neither does it suffice to limit oneself to the general images of language. Positive knowledge is necessary for understanding; we have to know the *symbols* and the mythological motives. We have to know what is in the storeroom of the human mind, we have to know the documents of the people. The more we know, the better we will succeed in understanding certain symbols. In this seminar, we are forced to apply this *ethno-psychological method*, as we are dealing with children's dreams, to which the personal association material is missing in many cases. We will have to see how far we will get with it. We will not always come to a satisfactory solution. The purpose of this seminar is to practice on the basis of the material. The point is not to worm out brilliant interpretations through speculation. We have to content ourselves with recognizing the symbols in their wider psychological context, and thus find our way into the psychology of the dreamer. Let me give you a short example:

The dreamer is in a plain house with a peasant woman. He tells this woman of a long trip to Leipzig. On the horizon there appears a monstrous crayfish, at the same time a dinosaur, that catches him by taking him into its claws. Miraculously, the dreamer has a little divining-rod in his hand, with which he touches the monster's head. It collapses dead.

What is typical in this situation? There is a peasant woman—therefore something primitive.²⁵ In any case, it is meaningful that the man in this case has to dream of a peasant woman. It is an older peasant woman—so maybe his mother? Let us put a question mark behind this! Now, it is this woman whom the dreamer tells of his plan to go to Leipzig. There must be a causal connection between these two dream elements. The meeting of the dreamer with the peasant woman brings up the plan. Where is the connection between an alleged mother, a very simple mother, and a great plan? There are examples of this in literature.

²⁵ Jung uses the term *primitive* throughout in the sense of “basic, archaic”; cf. C. G. Jung, *Psychological Types*, CW 6, § 770 (ed).

Participant: Peer Gynt.

Professor Jung: Yes, and who else? The writer died only recently.

Participant: Barlach.²⁶

Professor Jung: Yes, Barlach, in his book *Der tote Tag* [*The Dead Day*]. There the blind father tells his son of the wonderful images he had seen at night. And the son says: "All these have to enter into reality!" But to this the mother replies: "Such a man has to bury his mother first." And she kills the son's horse with which he had wanted to ride into the world.

Here you have the connection between the mother and the son's plans: *the mother does not want to let the child go*. The boy has great plans that he can only realize, however, if his mother sets him free; and the plans that he makes are all the greater the more he is bound to his mother. The images have to be extremely fascinating indeed to have such an enticing effect as to get free from the mother. For staying with the mother means to remain in an unconscious state, without responsibility; therefore, never get away from the mother! Leaving one's parents is "a temple-desecrating motion backwards" (Nietzsche); it is a sacrilege to sever oneself from one's mother. We can conclude, therefore, that the great plans of the son are connected with being bound to his mother.

To the two symbols "woman" and "plan" comes the third, "monster." The dreamer has hardly told his story when a huge monster with claws appears, a lizard-crayfish, an arthropod, a monster, which takes him into its claws. This is *also the mother*, but the other mother, the one who brings *death*. The mother, as it is, has both aspects: on the one hand she gives life to the child, cares for him, brings him up; but as soon as he wants to leave, she cannot let him go, her heart would break. That is why the mother says in Barlach: "Such a man has to bury his mother first." For this, however, the son has not got the heart; he cannot murder his mother, and therefore she devours him. The mother is also a *sarcophagus* ("carnivore"). She is like Mother Earth, from whom we come and into whom we will go again; she is life, but also death; she is the Ancestress in the West, as she is

²⁶ Ernst Barlach (1870–1938), German sculptor, graphic designer, and writer (trans.).

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called in a Polynesian myth.²⁷ That is why the Etruscans buried the ashes of their dead in the insides of the statue of the goddess Matuta, meaning: in the womb of the goddess.²⁸ In this way, the dead again entered the womb of the mother. In the present dream the devouring mother appears as a monster. This lets us conclude that there was one thing the dreamer had not reckoned with: he will not get past the mother. For the time being, he does progress with a divining-rod, that is to say with a charm, but with a charm that does not really rescue him.

So we can satisfactorily explain this dream without personal material. It is about an eternal drama, here repeating itself in a particular case: this man had too great plans, he wanted to fly too high; in reality, he could not let go of the backward yearning, and this is how he perished. It really was a drama. At the climax of his life, the unconscious drove him into a neurosis. He got the mountain sickness, vertigo. He wanted to conjure it away, to force the realization of the plan, and that was his ruin.

This example shows you that dreams can be sufficiently explained by an exclusively objective method, without personal associations.

With the help of this example, I would also like to illustrate something else. In the case of complicated dreams, it is advisable to group the dreams. I want to give you a schema that can be generally applied.

1. Locale: Place, time, “dramatis personae.”
2. Exposition: Illustration of the problem.
3. Peripeteia: Illustration of the transformation—which can also leave room for a catastrophe.
4. Lysis: Result of the dream. Meaningful closure. Compensating illustration of the action of the dream.

Let us go through the elements of the dream we have just discussed:

1. Locale: Place: a plain house. Dramatis personae: the peasant woman, the dreamer.

²⁷ The name of the Ancestress in the West is Hine-nui-te-po. In Paul Hambruch, ed., *Südseemärchen*.

²⁸ On the goddess Matuta, see C. G. Jung, *Symbols of Transformation*, CW 5, § 536, and figure 100 (ed.).

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