ERICH FROMM

THE FORGOTTEN LANGUAGE

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE UNDERSTANDING OF DREAMS, FAIRY TALES, AND MYTHS

FROM THE INTERNATIONAL BESTSELLING AUTHOR OF *THE ART OF LOVING*

The Forgotten Language

An Introduction to the Understanding of Dreams, Fairy Tales, and Myths

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Foreword

This book is based on lectures which I gave, as an introductory course, to the postgraduate students training at the William A. White Institute of Psychiatry and to undergraduate students at Benningto College. It is addressed to a similar audience, to the student of psychiatry and psychology and to th interested layman. As the subtitle indicates, this book is an *introduction* into the understanding symbolic language; for this reason it does not deal with many of the more complicated problems this field, the discussion of which would have been incompatible with the purpose of an introduction have thus, for instance, discussed Freud's theory only on the level of his *Interpretation of Dreams* ar not in the light of the more difficult concepts he developed in his later writings; nor have I attempte to discuss those aspects of symbolic language which, although necessary for the full understanding the problems involved, presuppose the more general information which these pages try to convey. intend to deal with these problems in a second volume later on.

The term, an introduction to the *understanding* of dreams, etc., was chosen intentionally instea of using the more conventional term *interpretation*. If, as I shall try to show in the following page symbolic language is a language in its own right, in fact, the only universal language the human rac ever developed, then the problem is indeed one of understanding it rather than of interpreting as if or dealt with an artificially manufactured secret code. I believe that such understanding is important f every person who wants to be in touch with himself, and not only for the psychotherapist who wants cure mental disturbances; hence I believe that the understanding of symbolic language should b taught in our high schools and colleges just as other "foreign languages" are part of their curriculur One of the aims of this book is to contribute to the realization of this idea.

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Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston, excerpts from Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Lectures and Biographic* *Sketches*; Classics Club, W. J. Black, New York, excerpts from Plato, *Phaedo*, trans. by B. Jowe Oxford Clarendon Press, excerpts from *The Works of Aristotle*, trans. under the editorship of W. I Ross; Harvard University Press, Cambridge, excerpts from Lucretius, *De Rerum Natura*, trans. by V H. D. Rouse; Yale University Press, New Haven, excerpts from C. J. Jung, *Psychology and Religio* B. W. Huebsch, excerpts from Henri Bergson, *Dreams*, trans. by E. E. Slosson; Alfred A. Knopf, Ne York, excerpts from *The Trial* by Franz Kafka, trans. by E. I. Muir.

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A dream which is not understood is like a letter which is not opened.

Talmud

Sleep takes off the costume of circumstance, arms us, with terrible freedom, so that every will rushes to a deed. A skillful man reads his dreams for his self-knowledge; yet not the details but the quality.

Emerson

I Introduction

If it is true that the ability to be puzzled is the beginning of wisdom, then this truth is a sa commentary on the wisdom of modern man. Whatever the merits of our high degree of literary an universal education, we have lost the gift for being puzzled. Everything is supposed to be known— not to ourselves then to some specialist whose business it is to know what we do not know. In fact, t be puzzled is embarrassing, a sign of intellectual inferiority. Even children are rarely surprised, or least they try not to show that they are; and as we grow older we gradually lose the ability to b surprised. To have the right answers seems all-important; to ask the right questions is considere insignificant by comparison.

This attitude is perhaps one reason why one of the most puzzling phenomena in our lives, o dreams, gives so little cause for wonder and for raising questions. We all dream; we do not understar our dreams, yet we act as if nothing strange goes on in our sleep minds, strange at least by compariso with the logical purposeful doings of our minds when we are awake.

When we are awake, we are active, rational beings, eager to make an effort to get what we wa and prepared to defend ourselves against attack. We act and we observe; we see things outsid perhaps not as they are, but at least in such a manner that we can use and manipulate them. But we a also rather unimaginative, and rarely—except as children or if we are poets—does our imagination g beyond duplicating the stories and plots that are part of our actual experience. We are effective bu somewhat dull. We call the field of our daytime observation “reality” and are proud of our “realism and our cleverness in manipulating it.

When we are asleep, we awake to another form of existence. We dream. We invent stories whic never happened and sometimes for which there is not even any precedent in reality. Sometimes we a the hero, sometimes the villain; sometimes we see the most beautiful scenes and are happy; often w are thrown into extreme terror. But whatever the role we play in the dream we are the author, it is ou dream, we have invented the plot.

Most of our dreams have one characteristic in common: they do not follow the laws of logic th govern our waking thought. The categories of space and time are neglected. People who are dead, w see alive; events which we watch in the present, occurred many years ago. We dream of two events a occurring simultaneously when in reality they could not possibly occur at the same time. We pay ju as little attention to the laws of space. It is simple for us to move to a distant place in an instant, to b in two places at once, to fuse two persons into one, or to have one person suddenly be changed in another. Indeed, in our dreams we are the creators of a world where time and space, which limit all th activities of our body, have no power.

Another odd thing about our dreams is that we think of events and persons we have not thought

for years, and whom, in the waking state, we would never have remembered. Suddenly they appear
the dream as acquaintances whom we had thought of many times. In our sleeping life, we seem to ta
the vast store of experience and memory which in the daytime we do not know exists.

Yet, despite all these strange qualities, our dreams are real to us while we are dreaming; as real any experience we have in our waking life. There is no “as if” in the dream. The dream is present, re experience, so much so, indeed, that it suggests two questions: What is reality? How do we know th what we dream is unreal and what we experience in our waking life is real? A Chinese poet ha expressed this aptly: “I dreamt last night that I was a butterfly and now I don’t know whether I am man who dreamt he was a butterfly, or perhaps a butterfly who dreams now that he is a man.” A these exciting, vivid experiences of the night not only disappear when we wake up, but we have th greatest difficulty trying to remember them. Most of them we simply forget, so completely that we c not even remember having lived in this other world. Some we faintly remember at the moment waking, and the next second they are beyond recall. A few we do remember, and these are the ones w speak of when we say, “I had a dream.” It is as if friendly, or unfriendly, spirits had visited us and a the break of day had suddenly disappeared; we hardly remember that they had been there and ho intensely we had been occupied with them.

Perhaps more puzzling than all the factors already mentioned is the similarity of the products our creativeness during sleep with the oldest creations of man—the myths.

Actually, we are not too much puzzled by myths. If they are made respectable as part of ou religion, we give them a conventional and superficial acknowledgment as part of a venerable traditio if they do not carry such traditional authority they are taken for the childish expression of the though of man before he was enlightened by science. At any rate, whether ignored, despised, or respecte myths are felt to belong to a world completely alien to our own thinking. Yet the fact remains tha many of our dreams are, in both style and content, similar to myths, and we who find them strange an remote when we are awake have the ability to create these mythlike productions when we are asleep.

In the myth, too, dramatic events happen which are impossible in a world governed by the laws time and space: the hero leaves his home and country to save the world, or he flees from his missio and lives in the belly of a big fish; he dies and is reborn; the mythical bird is burned and emerges fro the ashes more beautiful than before. Of course, different peoples created different myths just different people dream different dreams. But in spite of all these differences, all myths and all drean have one thing in common, they are all “written” in the same language, *symbolic language*.

The myths of the Babylonians, Indians, Egyptians, Hebrews, Greeks are written in the san language as those of the Ashantis or the Trukese. The dreams of someone living today in New York o in Paris are the same as the dreams reported from people living some thousand years ago in Athens o in Jerusalem. The dreams of ancient and modern man are written in the same language as the myth whose authors lived in the dawn of history.

Symbolic language is a language in which inner experiences, feelings and thoughts are expresse as if they were sensory experiences, events in the outer world. It is a language which has a differe logic from the conventional one we speak in the daytime, a logic in which not time and space are th ruling categories but intensity and association. It is the one universal language the human race h ever developed, the same for all cultures and throughout history. It is a language with its ow grammar and syntax, as it were, a language one must understand if one is to understand the meani of myths, fairy tales and dreams.

Yet this language has been forgotten by modern man. Not when he is asleep, but when he awake. Is it important to understand this language also in our waking state?

For the people of the past, living in the great cultures of both East and West, there was no doub as to the answer to this question. For them myths and dreams were among the most significa expressions of the mind, and failure to understand them would have amounted to illiteracy. It is on in the past few hundred years of Western culture that this attitude has changed. At best, myths wer supposed to be naïve fabrications of the pre-scientific mind, created long before man had made h great discoveries about nature and had learned some of the secrets of its mastery.

Dreams fared even worse in the judgment of modern enlightenment. They were considered to b plain senseless, and unworthy of the attention of grown-up men, who were busy with such importa matters as building machines and considered themselves “realistic” because they saw nothing but th reality of things they could conquer and manipulate; realists who have a special word for each type automobile, but only the one word “love” to express the most varied kinds of affective experienc Moreover, if all our dreams were pleasant phantasmagorias in which our hearts’ wishes were fulfille we might feel friendlier toward them. But many of them leave us in an anxious mood; often they a nightmares from which we awake gratefully acknowledging that we only dreamed. Others, though n nightmares, are disturbing for other reasons. They do not fit the person we are sure we are durin daytime. We dream of hating people whom we believe we are fond of, of loving someone whom w thought we had no interest in. We dream of being ambitious, when we are convinced of being modes we dream of bowing down and submitting, when we are so proud of our independence. But worse tha all this the fact that we do not understand our dreams while we, the waking person, are sure we ca understand anything if we put our minds to it. Rather than be confronted with such an overwhelmin proof of the limitations of our understanding, we accuse the dreams of not making sense.

A profound change in the attitude toward myths and dreams has taken place in the past fe decades. This change was greatly stimulated by Freud’s work. After starting out with the restricte aim of helping the neurotic patient to understand the reasons for his illness, Freud proceeded to stud the dream as a universal human phenomenon, the same in the sick and in the healthy person. He sa that dreams were essentially not different from myths and fairy tales and that to understand th language of the one was to understand the language of the others. And the work of anthropologis focused new attention on myths. They were collected and studied, and some few pioneers in this fiel like J. J. Bachofen, succeeded in throwing new light on the prehistory of man.

But the study of myths and dreams is still in its infancy. It suffers from various limitations. On is a certain dogmatism and rigidity that has resulted from the claims of various psychoanalyt schools, each insisting that it has the only true understanding of symbolic language. Thus we lo sight of the many-sidedness of symbolic language and try to force it into the Procrustean bed of on and only one, kind of meaning.

Another limitation is that interpretation of dreams is still considered legitimate only whe employed by the psychiatrist in the treatment of neurotic patients. On the contrary, I believe th symbolic language is the one foreign language that each of us must learn. Its understanding brings u in touch with one of the most significant sources of wisdom, that of the myth, and it brings us in touc with the deeper layers of our own personalities. In fact, it helps us to understand a level of experienc that is specifically human because it is that level which is common to all humanity, in content as we as in style. The Talmud says, “Dreams which are not interpreted are like letters which have not bee opened.” Indeed, both dreams and myths are important communications from ourselves to ourselve If we do not understand the language in which they are written, we miss a great deal of what we kno and tell ourselves in those hours when we are not busy manipulating the outside world.

II The Nature of Symbolic Language

Let us assume you want to tell someone the difference between the taste of white wine and red win This may seem quite simple to you. You know the difference very well; why should it not be easy t explain it to someone else? Yet you find the greatest difficulty putting this taste difference into word And probably you will end up by saying, “Now look here, I can’t explain it to you. Just drink red wi and then white wine, and you will know what the difference is.” You have no difficulty in findi words to explain the most complicated machine, and yet words seem to be futile to describe a simp taste experience. Are we not confronted with the same difficulty when we try to explain a feeli experience? Let us take a mood in which you feel lost, deserted, where the world looks gray, a litt frightening though not really dangerous. You want to describe this mood to a friend, but again yo find yourself groping for words and eventually feel that nothing you have said is an adequa explanation of the many nuances of the mood. The following night you have a dream. You se yourself in the outskirts of a city just before dawn, the streets are empty except for a milk wagon, t houses look poor, the surroundings are unfamiliar, you have no means of accustomed transportation t places familiar to you and where you feel you belong. When you wake up and remember the dream, occurs to you that the feeling you had in that dream was exactly the feeling of lostness and grayne you tried to describe to your friend the day before. It is just one picture, whose visualization took le than a second. And yet this picture is a more vivid and precise description than you could have give by talking *about* it at length. The picture you see in the dream is a *symbol* of something you felt.

What is a symbol? A symbol is often defined as “something that stands for something else.” Th definition seems rather disappointing. It becomes more interesting, however, if we concern ourselv with those symbols which are sensory expressions of seeing, hearing, smelling, touching, standing f a “something else” which is an inner experience, a feeling or thought. A symbol of this kind something outside ourselves; that which it symbolizes is something inside ourselves. Symbol language is language in which we express inner experience as if it we’re a sensory experience, as if were something we were doing or something that was done to us in the world of things. Symbol language is language in which the world outside is a symbol of the world inside, a symbol for o souls and our minds.

If we define a symbol as “something which stands for something else,” the crucial question i *What is the specific connection between the symbol and that which it symbolizes?*

In answer to this question we can differentiate between three kinds of symbols: the *conventiona* the *accidental* and the *universal* symbol. As will become apparent presently, only the latter two kin of symbols express inner experiences as if they were sensory experiences, and only they have t elements of symbolic language.

The *conventional* symbol is the best known of the three, since we employ it in everyday languag

If we see the word “table” or hear the sound “table,” the letters T-A-B-L-E stand for something els They stand for the thing table that we see, touch and use. What is the connection between the *wo* “table” and the thing “table”? Is there any inherent relationship between them? Obviously not. T thing table has nothing to do with the sound table, and the only reason the word symbolizes the thi is the convention of calling this particular thing by a particular name. We learn this connection children by the repeated experience of bearing the word in reference to the thing until a lasti association is formed so that we don’t have to think to find the right word.

There are some words, however, where the association is not only conventional. When we s “phooey,” for instance, we make with our lips a movement of dispelling the air quickly. It is expression of disgust in which our mouths participate. By this quick expulsion of air we imitate a thus express our intention to expel something, to get it out of our system. In this case, as in so others, the symbol has an inherent connection with the feeling it symbolizes. But even if we assu that originally many or even all words had their origins in some such inherent connection betwe symbol and the symbolized, most words no longer have this meaning for us when we learn a langua

Words are not the only illustration for conventional symbols, although they are the most freque and best known ones. Pictures also can be conventional symbols. A flag, for instance, may stand fo specific country, and yet there is no connection between the specific colors and the country for whi they stand. They have been accepted as denoting that particular country, and we translate the visu impression of the flag into the concept of that country, again on conventional grounds. Some pictor symbols are not entirely conventional; for example, the cross. The cross can be merely a conventio symbol of the Christian church and in that respect no different from a flag. But the specific content the cross referring to Jesus’ death or, beyond that, to the interpenetration of the material and spiritu planes, puts the connection between the symbol and what it symbolizes beyond the level of me conventional symbols.

The very opposite to the conventional symbol is the *accidental* symbol, although they have o thing in common: there is no intrinsic relationship between the symbol and that which it symbolize Let us assume that someone has had a saddening experience in a certain city; when he hears the nan of that city, he will easily connect the name with a mood of sadness, just as he would connect it with mood of joy had his experience been a happy one. Quite obviously there is nothing in the nature of t city that is either sad or joyful. It is the individual experience connected with the city that makes it symbol of a mood.

The same reaction could occur in connection with a house, a street, a certain dress, certa scenery, or anything once connected with a specific mood. We might find ourselves dreaming that w are in a certain city. In fact, there may be no particular mood connected with it in the dream; all v see is a street or even simply the name of the city. We ask ourselves why we happened to think of th city in our sleep and may discover that we had fallen asleep in a mood similar to the one symbolize by the city. The picture in the dream represents this mood, the city "stands for" the mood one experienced in it. Here the connection between the symbol and the experience symbolized is entire accidental.

In contrast to the conventional symbol, the accidental symbol cannot be shared by anyone el except as we relate the events connected with the symbol. For this reason accidental symbols a rarely used in myths, fairy tales, or works of art written in symbolic language because they are n communicable unless the writer adds a lengthy comment to each symbol he uses. In dreams, howeve accidental symbols are frequent, and later in this book I shall explain the method of understandi them.

The *universal* symbol is one in which there is an intrinsic relationship between the symbol a that which it represents. We have already given one example, that of the outskirts of the city. Th sensory experience of a deserted, strange, poor environment has indeed a significant relationship to mood of lostness and anxiety. True enough, if we have never been in the outskirts of a city we coul not use that symbol just as the word "table" would be meaningless had we never seen a table. Th symbol is meaningful only to city dwellers and would be meaningless to people living in cultures th have no big cities. Many other universal symbols, however, are rooted in the experience of ever human being. Take, for instance, the symbol of fire. We are fascinated by certain qualities of fire in fireplace. First of all, by its aliveness. It changes continuously, it moves all the time, and yet there constancy in it. It remains the same without being the same. It gives the impression of power, energy, of grace and lightness. It is as if it were dancing and had an inexhaustible source of energ When we use fire as a symbol, we describe the inner experience characterized by the same elemen which we notice in the sensory experience of fire; the mood of energy, lightness, movement, grac gaiety—sometimes one, sometimes another of these elements being predominant in the feeling.

Similar in some ways and different in others is the symbol of water—of the ocean or of th stream. Here, too, we find the blending of change and permanence, of constant movement and yet permanence. We also feel the quality of aliveness, continuity and energy. But there is a differenc where fire is adventurous, quick, exciting, water is quiet, slow and steady. Fire has an element surprise; water an element of predictability. Water symbolizes the mood of aliveness, too, but on which is "heavier," "slower," and more comforting than exciting.

That a phenomenon of the physical world can be the adequate expression of an inner experienc that the world of things can be a symbol of the world of the mind, is not surprising. We all know th our bodies express our minds. Blood rushes to our heads when we are furious, it rushes away fro them when we are afraid; our hearts beat more quickly when we are angry, and the whole body has different tonus if we are happy from the one it has when we are sad. We express our moods by ou facial expressions and our attitudes and feelings by movements and gestures so precise that othe recognize them more accurately from our gestures than from our words. Indeed, the body is a symb —and not an allegory—of the mind. Deeply and genuinely felt emotion, and even any genuinely fe thought, is expressed in our whole organism. In the case of the universal symbol, we find the san connection between mental and physical experience. Certain physical phenomena suggest by the very nature certain emotional and mental experiences, and we express emotional experiences in th language of physical experiences, that is to say, symbolically.

The universal symbol is the only one in which the relationship between the symbol and th which is symbolized is not coincidental but intrinsic. It is rooted in the experience of the affini between an emotion or thought, on the one hand, and a sensory experience, on the other. It can b called universal because it is shared by all men, in contrast not only to the accidental symbol, which by its very nature entirely personal, but also to the conventional symbol, which is restricted to a grou of people sharing the same convention. The universal symbol is rooted in the properties of our bod our senses, and our mind, which are common to all men and, therefore, not restricted to individuals to specific groups. Indeed, the language of the universal symbol is the one common tongue develope by the human race, a language which it forgot before it succeeded in developing a univers conventional language.

There is no need to speak of a racial inheritance in order to explain the universal character symbols. Every human being who shares the essential features of bodily and mental equipment wi the rest of mankind is capable of speaking and understanding the symbolic language that is based upo these common properties. Just as we do not need to learn to cry when we are sad or to get red in th face when we are angry, and just as these reactions are not restricted to any particular race or group people, symbolic language does not have to be learned and is not restricted to any segment of th human race. Evidence for this is to be found in the fact that symbolic language as it is employed myths and dreams is found in all cultures in so-called primitive as well as such highly develope cultures as Egypt and Greece. Furthermore, the symbols used in these various cultures are striking similar since they all go back to the basic sensory as well as emotional experiences shared by men all cultures. Added evidence is to be found in recent experiments in which people who had n knowledge of the theory of dream interpretation were able, under hypnosis, to interpret the symbolis of their dreams without any difficulty. After emerging from the hypnotic state and being asked t interpret the same dreams, they were puzzled and said, “Well, there is no meaning to them—it is ju nonsense.”

The foregoing statement needs qualification, however. Some symbols differ in meanin according to the difference in their realistic significance in various cultures. For instance, the functio and consequently the meaning of the sun is different in northern countries and in tropical countries. northern countries, where water is plentiful, all growth depends on sufficient sunshine. The sun is th warm, life-giving, protecting, loving power. In the Near East, where the heat of the sun is much mo

powerful, the sun is a dangerous and even threatening power from which man must protect himse
while water is felt to be the source of all life and the main condition for growth. We may speak o
dialects of universal symbolic language, which are determined by those differences in natur
conditions which cause certain symbols to have a different meaning in different regions of the earth.

Quite different from these "symbolic dialects" is the fact that many symbols have more than on meaning in accordance with different kinds of experiences which can be connected with one and th same natural phenomenon. Let us take up the symbol of fire again. If we watch fire in the fireplac which is a source of pleasure and comfort, it is expressive of a mood of aliveness, warmth, an pleasure. But if we see a building or forest on fire, it conveys to us an experience of threat or terror, o the powerlessness of man against the elements of nature. Fire, then, can be the symbol representation of inner aliveness and happiness as well as of fear, powerlessness, or of one's ow destructive tendencies. The same holds true of the symbol water. Water can be a most destructiv force when it is whipped up by a storm or when a swollen river floods its banks. Therefore, it can b the symbolic expression of horror and chaos as well as of comfort and peace.

Another illustration of the same principle is a symbol of a valley. The valley enclosed betwee mountains can arouse in us the feeling of security and comfort, of protection against all dangers fro the outside. But the protecting mountains can also mean isolating walls which do not permit us to g out of the valley and thus the valley can become a symbol of imprisonment. The particular meaning the symbol in any given place can only be determined from the whole context in which the symb appears, and in terms of the predominant experiences of the person using the symbol. We shall retur to this question in our discussion of dream symbolism.

A good illustration of the function of the universal symbol is a story, written in symbol language, which is known to almost everyone in Western culture: the Book of Jonah. Jonah has hear God's voice telling him to go to Nineveh and preach to its inhabitants to give up their evil ways le they be destroyed. Jonah cannot help hearing God's voice and that is why he is a prophet. But he is a unwilling prophet, who, though knowing what he should do, tries to run away from the command God (or, as we may say, the voice of his conscience). He is a man who does not care for other huma beings. He is a man with a strong sense of law and order, but without love.[1]

How does the story express the inner processes in Jonah?

We are told that Jonah went down to Joppa and found a ship which should bring him to Tarshisl In mid-ocean a storm rises and, while everyone else is excited and afraid, Jonah goes into the ship belly and falls into a deep sleep. The sailors, believing that God must have sent the storm becau someone on the ship is to be punished, wake Jonah, who had told them he was trying to flee fro God's command. He tells them to take him and cast him forth into the sea and that the sea would the become calm. The sailors (betraying a remarkable sense of humanity by first trying everything el before following his advice) eventually take Jonah and cast him into the sea, which immediately sto raging. Jonah is swallowed by a big fish and stays in the fish's belly three days and three nights. H prays to God to free him from this prison. God makes the fish vomit out Jonah unto the dry land ar Jonah goes to Nineveh, fulfills God's command, and thus saves the inhabitants of the city.

The story is told as if these events had actually happened. However, it is written in symbol language and all the realistic events described are symbols for the inner experiences of the hero. W find a sequence of symbols which follow one another: going into the ship, going into the ship's bell falling asleep, being in the ocean, and being in the fish's belly. All these symbols stand for the sam inner experience: for a condition of being protected and isolated, of safe withdrawal fro communication with other human beings. They represent what could be represented in anoth symbol, the fetus in the mother's womb. Different as the ship's belly, deep sleep, the ocean, and fish's belly are realistically, they are expressive of the same inner experience, of the blending betwee protection and isolation.

In the manifest story events happen in space and time: *first*, going into the ship's belly; *the* falling asleep; *then*, being thrown into the ocean; *then*, being swallowed by the fish. One thing happer after the other and, although some events are obviously unrealistic, the story has its own logic consistency in terms of time and space. But if we understand that the writer did not intend to tell u the story of external events, but of the inner experience of a man torn between his conscience and h wish to escape from his inner voice, it becomes clear that his various actions following one after th other express the same mood in him; and that *sequence in time* is expressive of a *growing intensity* the same feeling. In his attempt to escape from his obligation to his fellow men Jonah isolates himse more and more until, in the belly of the fish, the protective element has so given way to th imprisoning element that he can stand it no longer and is forced to pray to God to be released fro where he had put himself. (This is a mechanism which we find so characteristic of neurosis. A attitude is assumed as a defense against a danger, but then it grows far beyond its original defens function and becomes a neurotic symptom from which the person tries to be relieved.) Thus Jonah escape into protective isolation ends in the terror of being imprisoned, and he takes up his life at th point where he had tried to escape.

There is another difference between the logic of the manifest and of the latent story. In th manifest story the logical connection is one of causality of external events. Jonah wants to go overse *because* he wants to flee from God, he falls asleep *because* he is tired, he is thrown overboard *becau* he is supposed to be the reason for the storm, and he is swallowed by the fish *because* there are ma eating fish in the ocean. One event occurs because of a previous event. (The last part of the story unrealistic but not illogical.) But in the latent story the logic is different. The various events a related to each other by their association with the same inner experience. What appears to be a caus sequence of external events stands for a connection of experiences linked with each other by the association in terms of inner events. This is as logical as the manifest story—but it is a logic of different kind. If we turn now to an examination of the nature of the dream, the logic governin

symbolic language will become more transparent.

III The Nature of Dreams

The views held about the nature of dreams differed vastly throughout the centuries and throug various cultures. But whether one believes that dreams are real experiences of our disembodied soul which have left the body during sleep, or whether one holds that dreams are inspired by God, or b evil spirits, whether one sees in them the expression of our irrational passions or, in contrast, of ou highest and most moral powers, one idea is not controversial: the view that all dreams are meaningf and significant. Meaningful, because they contain a message which can be understood if one has th key for its translation. Significant, because we do not dream of anything that is trifling, even though may be expressed in a language which hides the significance of the dream message behind a triflin façade.

Only in recent centuries was there a radical departure from this view. Dream interpretation wa relegated to the realm of superstitions, and the enlightened, educated person, layman or scientist, ha no doubt that dreams were senseless and insignificant manifestations of our minds, at best ment reflexes of bodily sensations experienced during sleep.

It was Freud who, at the beginning of the twentieth century, reaffirmed the old concept: drean are both meaningful and significant; we do not dream anything that is not an important expression our inner lives and all dreams can be understood provided we have the key; the interpretation dreams is the "via regia," the main avenue leading to the understanding of the unconscious an thereby to the most powerful motivating force in pathological as well as in normal behavior. Beyon this general statement about the nature of dreams Freud emphatically and somewhat rigid reaffirmed one of the oldest theories: the dream is the fulfillment of irrational passions, represse during our waking life.

Instead of presenting Freud's and the older theories of the dream at this point, I shall return t them in a later chapter and proceed now to discuss the nature of the dream as I have come understand it, with the help of Freud's work and as the result of my own experience as a dreamer an as a dream interpreter.

In view of the fact that there is no expression of mental activity which does not appear in th dream, I believe that the only description of the nature of dreams that does not distort or narrow dov the phenomenon is the broad one that *dreaming is a meaningful and significant expression of any kin of mental activity under the condition of sleep*.

Obviously this definition is too broad to be of much help for the understanding of the nature dreams unless we can say something more definite about the "condition of sleep" and the particul effect of this condition on our mental activity. If we can find out what the specific effect of sleeping on our mental activity, we may discover a good deal more about the nature of dreaming.

Physiologically, sleep is a condition of chemical regeneration of the organism; energy is restore while no action takes place and even sensory perception is almost entirely shut off. Psychologicall sleep suspends the main function characteristic of waking life: man's reacting toward reality b perception and action. This difference between the biological functions of waking and of sleeping i in fact, a difference between two states of existence.

In order to appreciate the effect of sleep existence on our mental process, we must first consider more general problem, that of the interdependence of the kind of activity we are engaged in and o process. The way we think is largely determined by what we do and what we are interested achieving. This does not mean that our thinking is distorted by our interest but simply that it diffe according to it.

What is, for example, the attitude of different people toward a forest? A painter who has gon there to paint, the owner of the forest who wishes to evaluate his business prospects, an officer who interested in the tactical problem of defending the area, a hiker who wants to enjoy himself—each them will have an entirely different concept of the forest because a different aspect is significant each one. The painter's experience will be one of form and color; the businessman's of size, numbe and age of the trees, the officer's of visibility and protection; the hiker's of trails and motion. Whi they can all agree to the abstract statement that they stand at the edge of a forest, the different kinds activity they are set to accomplish will determine their experience of "seeing a forest."

The difference between the biological and psychological functions of sleeping and waking more fundamental than any difference between various kinds of activity, and accordingly th difference between the conceptual systems accompanying the two states is incomparably greater. I the waking state thoughts and feelings respond primarily to challenge—the task of mastering o environment, changing it, defending ourselves against it. Survival is the task of waking man; he subject to the laws that govern reality. This means that he has to think in terms of time and space an that his thoughts are subject to the laws of time and space logic.

While we sleep we are not concerned with bending the outside world to our purposes. We ar helpless, and sleep, therefore, has rightly been called the "brother of death." But we are also free, fre than when awake. We are free from the burden of work, from the task of attack or defense, fron watching and mastering reality. We need not look at the outside world; we look at our inner world, ar concerned exclusively with ourselves. When asleep we may be likened to a fetus or a corpse; we ma also be likened to angels, who are not subject to the laws of "reality." In sleep the realm of necessi has given way to the realm of freedom in which "I am" is the only system to which thoughts an feelings refer. Mental activity during sleep has a logic different from that of waking existence. Slee experience need not pay any attention to qualities that matter only when one copes with reality. If feel, for instance, that a person is a coward, I may dream that he changed from a man into a chicke This change is logical in terms of what I feel about the person, illogical only in terms of m orientation to outside reality (in terms of what I could do, realistically, to or with the person). Slee experience is not lacking in logic but is subject to different logical rules, which are entirely valid that particular experiential state.

Sleep and waking life are the two poles of human existence. Waking life is taken up with th function of action, sleep is freed from it. Sleep is taken up with the function of self-experience. Whe we wake from our sleep, we move into the realm of action. We are then oriented in terms of th system, and our memory operates within it: we remember what can be recalled in space-tin concepts. The sleep world has disappeared.

Experiences we had in it—our dreams—are remembered with the greatest difficulty.[2] Th situation has been represented symbolically in many a folk tale: at night ghosts and spirits, good ar evil, occupy the scene, but when dawn arrives, they disappear, and nothing is left of all the intens experience.

From these considerations certain conclusions about the nature of the unconscious follow: It neither Jung's mythical realm of racially inherited experience nor Freud's seat of irrational libidin forces. It must be understood in terms of the principle: "What we think and feel is influenced by wh we do."

Consciousness is the mental activity in our state of being preoccupied with external reality—wi acting. The unconscious is the mental experience in a state of existence in which we have shut o communications with the outer world are no longer preoccupied with action but with our sel experience. The unconscious is an experience related to a special mode of life—that of non-activit and the characteristics of the unconscious follow from the nature of this mode of existence. Th qualities of consciousness, on the other hand, are determined by the nature of action and by th survival function of the waking state of existence.

The "unconscious" is the unconscious only in relation to the "normal" state of activity. When w speak of "unconscious" we really say only that an experience is alien to that frame of mind whic exists while and as we act; it is then felt as a ghostlike, intrusive element, hard to get hold of and ha to remember. But the day world is as unconscious in our sleep experience as the night world is in ou waking experience. The term "unconscious" is customarily used solely from the standpoint of da experience; and thus it fails to denote that both conscious and unconscious are only different states mind referring to different states of existence.

It will be argued that in the waking state of existence, too, thinking and feeling are not entire subject to the limitations of time and space; that our creative imagination permits us to think abo past and future objects as if they were present, and of distant objects as if they were before our eye that our waking feeling is not dependent on the physical presence of the object nor on its co-existen in time; that, therefore, the absence of the space-time system is not characteristic of sleep existence contradistinction to waking existence, but of thinking and feeling in contradistinction to acting. Th welcome objection permits me to clarify an essential point in my argument.

We must differentiate between the contents of thought processes and the *logical categori* employed in thinking. While it is true that the contents of our waking thoughts are not subject limitations of space and time, the categories of logical thinking are those of the space-time nature. can, for instance, think of my father and state that his attitude in a certain situation is identical wi mine. This statement is logically correct. On the other hand, if I state “I am my father,” the stateme is “illogical” because it is not conceived in reference to the physical world. The sentence is logica however, in a purely experiential realm: it expresses the experience of identity with my father. Logic thought processes in the waking state are subject to categories which are rooted in a special form existence—the one in which we relate ourselves to reality in terms of action. In my sleep existenc which is characterized by lack of even potential action, logical categories are employed which hav reference only to my self-experience. The same holds true of feeling. When I feel, in the waking stat with regard to a person whom I have not seen for twenty years, I remain aware of the fact that th person is not present. If I dream about the person, my feeling deals with the person as if he or she we present. But to say “as if he were present” is to express the feeling in logical “waking life” concept In sleep existence there is no “as if”; the person is present.

In the foregoing pages the attempt has been made to describe the conditions of sleep and to dra from this description certain conclusions concerning the quality of dream activity. We must no proceed to study one specific element among the conditions of sleep which will prove to be of gre significance to the understanding of dream processes. We have said that while we are asleep we a not occupied with managing outer reality. We do not perceive it and we do not influence it, nor are w subject to the influences of the outside world on us. From this it follows that the effect of th separation from reality depends on the quality of reality itself. If the influence from the outside wor is essentially beneficial, the absence of this influence during sleep would tend to lower the value our dream activity, so that it would be inferior to our mental activities during the daytime when we a exposed to the beneficial influence of outside reality.

But are we right in assuming that the influence of reality is exclusively a beneficial one? May not be that it is also harmful and that, therefore, the absence of its influence tends to bring for qualities superior to those we have when we are awake?

In speaking of the reality outside ourselves, reference is not made primarily to the world nature. Nature as such is neither good nor bad. It may be helpful to us or dangerous, and the absence our perception of it relieves us, indeed, from our task of trying to master it or of defending ourselv against it; but it does not make us either more stupid or wiser, better or worse. It is quite different wi the man-made world around us, with the culture in which we live. Its effect upon us is qui ambiguous, although we are prone to assume that it is entirely to our benefit.

Indeed, the evidence that cultural influences are beneficial to us seems almost overwhelmin

What differentiates us from the world of animals is our capacity to create culture. What differentiat the higher from the lower stages of human development is the variation in cultural level. The mo elementary element of culture, language, is the precondition for any human achievement. Man h been rightly called a symbol-making animal, for without our capacity to speak, we could hardly b called human. But every other human function also depends on our contact with the outside world. W learn to think by observing others and by being taught by them. We develop our emotiona intellectual and artistic capacities under the influence of contact with the accumulation of knowled and artistic achievement that created society. We learn to love and to care for others by contact wit them, and we learn to curb impulses of hostility and egoism by love for others, or at least by fear them.

Is, then, the man-made reality outside ourselves not the most significant factor for th development of the very best in us, and must we not expect that, when deprived of contact with th outside world, we regress temporarily to a primitive, animal-like, unreasonable state of mind? Muc can be said in favor of such an assumption, and the view that such a regression is the essential featu of the state of sleep, and thus of dream activity, has been held by many students of dreaming fro Plato to Freud. From this viewpoint dreams are expected to be expressions of the irrational, primitiv strivings in us, and the fact that we forget our dreams so easily is amply explained by our bein ashamed of those irrational and criminal impulses which we express when we were not under th control of society. Undoubtedly this interpretation of dreams is true, and we shall presently turn to and give some illustrations. But the question is whether it is exclusively true or whether the negativ elements in the influence of society do not account for the paradoxical fact that *we are not only le reasonable and less decent in our dream but that we are also more intelligent, wiser, and capable o better judgment when we are asleep than when we are awake*.

Indeed, culture has not only a beneficial but also a detrimental influence on our intellectual ar moral functions. Human beings are dependent on each other, they need each other. But human histor up to now has been influenced by one fact: material production was not sufficient to satisfy th legitimate needs of all men. The table was set for only a few of the many who wanted to sit down ar eat. Those who were stronger tried to secure places for themselves which meant that they had prevent others from getting seats. If they had loved their brothers as much as Buddha or the Prophe or Jesus postulated, they would have shared their bread rather than eat meat and drink wine witho them. But, love being the highest and most difficult achievement of the human race, it is no slur o man that those who could sit at the table and enjoy the good things of life did not want to share, ar therefore were compelled to seek power over those who threatened their privileges. This power w often the power of the conqueror, the physical power that forced the majority to be satisfied with the lot. But physical power was not always available or sufficient. One had to have power over the min of people in order to make them refrain from using their fists. This control over mind and feeling w a necessary element in retaining the privileges of the few. In this process, however, the minds of th few became as distorted as the minds of the many. The guard who watches a prisoner becomes almo as much a prisoner as the prisoner himself. The “elite” who have to control those who are n “chosen” become the prisoners of their own restrictive tendencies. Thus the human mind, of bo rulers and ruled, becomes deflected from its essential human purpose, which is to feel and to thi humanly, to use and to develop the powers of reason and love that are inherent in man and without th full development of which he is crippled.

In this process of deflection and distortion man’s character becomes distorted. Aims which are i contrast to the interests of his real human self become paramount. His powers of love a impoverished, and he is driven to want power over others. His inner security is lessened, and he driven to seek compensation by passionate cravings for fame and prestige. He loses the sense dignity and integrity and is forced to turn himself into a commodity, deriving his self-respect from h salability, from his success. All this makes for the fact that we learn not only what is true, but als what is false. That we hear not only what is good, but are constantly under the influence of ide detrimental to life.

This holds true for a primitive tribe in which strict laws and customs influence the mind, but it true also for modern society with its alleged freedom from rigid ritualism. In many ways the spread literacy and of the media of mass communication has made the influence of cultural clichés effective as it is in a small, highly restricted tribal culture. Modern man is exposed to an almo unceasing “noise,” the noise of the radio, television, headlines, advertising, the movies, most of whic do not enlighten our minds but stultify them. We are exposed to rationalizing lies which masquera as truths, to plain nonsense which masquerades as common sense or as the higher wisdom of th specialist, of double talk, intellectual laziness, or dishonesty which speaks in the name of “honor” “realism”, as the case may be. We feel superior to the superstitions of former generations and so called primitive cultures, and we are constantly hammered at by the very same kind of superstitio beliefs that set themselves up as the latest discoveries of science. Is it surprising, then, that to b awake is not exclusively a blessing but also a curse? Is it surprising that in a state of sleep, when w are alone with ourselves, when we can look into ourselves without being bothered by the noise an nonsense that surround us in the daytime, we are better able to feel and to think our truest and mo valuable feelings and thoughts?

This, then, is the conclusion at which we arrive: the state of sleep has an ambiguous function. it the lack of contact with culture makes for the appearance both of our worst *and* of our bes therefore, if we dream, we may be less intelligent, less wise, and less decent, but we may also b better and wiser than in our waking life.

Having arrived at this point, the difficult problem arises: how do we know whether a dream is be understood as an expression of our best or of our worst? Is there any principle which can guide u in this attempt?

To answer this question we must leave the somewhat general level of our discussion and try t get further insight by discussing a number of concrete dream illustrations.

The following dream was reported by a man who had met a “very important person” the da before he had this dream. This person had the reputation of being wise and kind, and the dreamer ha come to see him, impressed by what everyone said about the old man. He had left after an hour or s with a feeling that he had met a great and kind man.

> I see Mr. X [the very important person]; his face looks quite different from what it looked yesterday. I see a cruel mouth and a hard face. He is laughingly telling someone that he has just succeeded in cheating a poor widow out of her last few cents. I feel a sense of revulsion.

When asked to tell what occurred to him about this dream, the dreamer remarked that he cou remember a fleeting feeling of disappointment when he walked into Mr. X’s room and had a fir glimpse of his face; this feeling, however, disappeared as soon as X started an engaging and friend conversation.

How are we to understand this dream? Perhaps the dreamer is envious of Mr. X’s fame and fo this reason dislikes him? In that case the dream would be the expression of the irrational hate that th dreamer harbors without being aware of it. But in the case I am reporting here, it was different. A subsequent meetings, after our dreamer had become aware of his suspicion through his dreams, h observed X carefully and discovered that there was in the man an element of ruthlessness which h had seen for the first time in his dream. His impression was corroborated by the few who dared doubt the majority’s opinion that X was such a kind man. It was corroborated by some facts in X’s li which were by no means so crude as that in the dream, but which nevertheless were expressive of similar spirit.

What we see, then, is that the dreamer’s insight into the character of X was much more astute his sleep than in his waking life. The “noise” of public opinion, which insisted that X was a wonderf man, prevented him from becoming aware of his critical feeling toward X when he saw him. It w only later, after he had this dream, that he could remember the split second of distrust and doubt h had felt. In his dream, when he was protected from this “noise” and in a position to be alone wi himself and his impressions and feelings, he could make a judgment which was more accurate an true than his waking-state judgment.

In this, as in every other dream, we can decide whether the dream is expressive of irration passion or of reason only if we consider the person of the dreamer, the mood he was in when he fe asleep, and whatever data we have on the reality aspect of the situation he has dreamed about. In th case our interpretation is corroborated by a number of factors. The dreamer could remember the initi