

Sigmund Freud's *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900), Chapter 5, part 2:

### **The Material and Sources of Dreams (Excerpts)**

Throughout our consideration of the theory of the somatic sources of dreams, I have refrained from urging the argument which arises from our analyses of dreams. If, by a procedure which has not been followed by other writers in their investigation of dreams, we can prove that the dream possesses intrinsic value as psychic action, that a wish supplies the motive of its formation, and that the experiences of the previous day furnish the most obvious material of its content, any other theory of dreams which neglects such an important method of investigation - and accordingly makes the dream appear a useless and enigmatical psychic reaction to somatic stimuli - may be dismissed without special criticism. For in this case there would have to be - and this is highly improbable - two entirely different kinds of dreams, of which only one kind has come under our observation, while the other kind alone has been observed by the earlier investigators. It only remains now to find a place in our theory of dreams for the facts on which the current doctrine of somatic dream-stimuli is based.

We have already taken the first step in this direction in advancing the thesis that the dream-work is under a compulsion to elaborate into a unified whole all the dream-stimuli which are simultaneously present [ . . . ]. We have seen that when two or more experiences capable of making an impression on the mind have been left over from the previous day, the wishes that result from them are united into one dream; similarly, that the impressions possessing psychic value and the indifferent experiences of the previous day unite in the dream-material, provided that connecting ideas between the two can be established. Thus the dream appears to be a reaction to everything which is simultaneously present as actual in the sleeping mind. As far as we have hitherto analysed the dream material, we have discovered it to be a collection of psychic remnants and memory-traces, which we were obliged to credit (on account of the preference shown for recent and for infantile material) with a character of psychological actuality, though the nature of this actuality was not at the time determinable. We shall now have little difficulty in predicting what will happen when to these actualities of the memory fresh material in the form of sensations is added during sleep. These stimuli, again, are of importance to the dream because they are actual; they are united with the other psychic actualities to provide the material for dream-formation. To express it in other words, the stimuli which occur during sleep are elaborated into a wish-fulfillment, of which the other components are the psychic remnants of daily experience with which we are already familiar. This combination, however, is not inevitable; we have seen that more than one kind of behaviour toward the physical stimuli received during sleep is possible. Where this combination is effected, a conceptual material for the dream-content has been found which will represent both kinds of dream-sources, the somatic as well as the psychic.

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But the dream cannot do otherwise than represent a wish in some situation as fulfilled; it is, as it were, confronted with the task of discovering what wish can be represented as fulfilled by the given sensation. Even if this given material is of a painful or disagreeable character, yet it is not unserviceable for the purposes of dream-formation. The psychic life has at its disposal even wishes whose fulfillment evokes displeasure, which seems a contradiction, but becomes perfectly intelligible if we take into account the presence of two sorts of psychic instance and the censorship that subsists between them.

In the psychic life there exist [ . . . ] repressed wishes, which belong to the first system, and to whose fulfillment the second system is opposed. We do not mean this in a historic sense - that such wishes have once existed and have subsequently been destroyed. The doctrine of repression, which we need in the study of psychoneuroses, asserts that such repressed wishes still exist, but simultaneously with an inhibition which weighs them down. Language has hit upon the truth when it speaks of the suppression (sub-pression, or pushing under) of such impulses. The psychic mechanism which enables such suppressed wishes to force their way to realization is retained in being and in working order. But if it happens that such a suppressed wish is fulfilled, the vanquished inhibition of the second system (which is capable of consciousness) is then expressed as discomfort. And, in order to conclude this argument: If sensations of a disagreeable character which originate from somatic sources are present during sleep, this constellation is utilized by the dream activity to procure the fulfillment - with more or less maintenance of the censorship - of an otherwise suppressed wish.

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#### DREAMS OF THE DEATH OF BELOVED PERSONS

Another series of dreams which may be called typical are those whose content is that a beloved relative, a parent, brother, sister, child, or the like, has died. We must at once distinguish two classes of such dreams: those in which the dreamer remains unmoved, and those in which he feels profoundly grieved by the death of the beloved person, even expressing this grief by shedding tears in his sleep.

We may ignore the dreams of the first group; they have no claim to be reckoned as typical. If they are analysed, it is found that they signify something that is not contained in them, that they are intended to mask another wish of some kind. This is the case in the dream of the aunt who sees the only son of her sister lying on a bier [ . . . ]. The dream does not mean that she desires the death of her little nephew; as we have learned, it merely conceals the wish to see a certain beloved person again after a long separation - the same person whom she had seen after as long an interval at the funeral of another nephew. This wish, which is the real content of the dream, gives no cause for sorrow, and for that reason no sorrow is felt in the dream. We see here that the feeling contained in the dream does not belong to the manifest, but to the latent dream-content, and that the affective content has remained free from the distortion which has befallen the conceptual content.

It is otherwise with those dreams in which the death of a beloved relative is imagined, and in which a painful affect is felt. These signify, as their content tells us, the wish that the person in question might die; and since I may here expect that the feelings of all my readers and of all who have had such dreams will lead them to reject my explanation, I must endeavour to rest my proof on the broadest possible basis.

We have already cited a dream from which we could see that the wishes represented as fulfilled in dreams are not always current wishes. They may also be bygone, discarded, buried and repressed wishes, which we must nevertheless credit with a sort of continued existence, merely on account of their reappearance in a dream. They are not dead, like persons who have died, in the sense that we know death, but are rather like the shades in the *Odyssey* which awaken to a certain degree of life so soon as they have drunk blood. The dream of the dead child in the box [ . . . ] contained a wish that had been present fifteen years earlier, and which had at that time been frankly admitted as real. Further - and this, perhaps, is not unimportant from the standpoint of the theory of dreams - a recollection from the dreamer's earliest childhood was at the root of this wish also. When the dreamer was a little child - but exactly when cannot be definitely determined - she heard that her mother, during the pregnancy of which she was the outcome, had fallen into a profound emotional depression, and had passionately wished for the death of the child in her womb. Having herself grown up and become pregnant, she was only following the example of her mother.

If anyone dreams that his father or mother, his brother or sister, has died, and his dream expresses grief, I should never adduce this as proof that he wishes any of them dead now. The theory of dreams does not go as far as to require this; it is satisfied with concluding that the dreamer has wished them dead at some time or other during his childhood. I fear, however, that this limitation will not go far to appease my critics; probably they will just as energetically deny the possibility that they ever had such thoughts, as they protest that they do not harbour them now. I must, therefore, reconstruct a portion of the submerged infantile psychology on the basis of the evidence of the present.

Let us first of all consider the relation of children to their brothers and sisters. I do not know why we presuppose that it must be a loving one, since examples of enmity among adult brothers and sisters are frequent in everyone's experience, and since we are so often able to verify the fact that this estrangement originated during childhood, or has always existed. Moreover, many adults who today are devoted to their brothers and sisters, and support them in adversity, lived with them in almost continuous enmity during their childhood. The elder child ill-treated the younger, slandered him, and robbed him of his toys; the younger was consumed with helpless fury against the elder, envied and feared him, or his earliest impulse toward liberty and his first revolt against injustice were directed against his oppressor. The parents say that the children do not agree, and cannot find the reason for it. It is not difficult to see that the character even of a well-behaved child is not the character we should wish to find in an adult. A child is absolutely egoistical; he feels his wants acutely, and strives remorselessly to satisfy them, especially against his competitors, other children, and first of all against his brothers and sisters. And yet we do not on that account call a child wicked - we call him naughty; he is not responsible for his misdeeds, either in our own judgment or in the eyes of the law. And this is as it

should be; for we may expect that within the very period of life which we reckon as childhood, altruistic impulses and morality will awake in the little egoist, and that, in the words of Meynert, a secondary ego will overlay and inhibit the primary ego. Morality, of course, does not develop simultaneously in all its departments, and furthermore, the duration of the amoral period of childhood differs in different individuals. Where this morality fails to develop we are prone to speak of degeneration; but here the case is obviously one of arrested development. Where the primary character is already overlaid by the later development it may be at least partially uncovered again by an attack of hysteria. The correspondence between the so-called hysterical character and that of a naughty child is positively striking. The obsessional neurosis, on the other hand, corresponds to a super-morality, which develops as a strong reinforcement against the primary character that is threatening to revive.

Many persons, then, who now love their brothers and sisters, and who would feel bereaved by their death, harbour in their unconscious hostile wishes, survivals from an earlier period, wishes which are able to realize themselves in dreams. It is, however, quite especially interesting to observe the behaviour of little children up to their third and fourth year towards their younger brothers or sisters. So far the child has been the only one; now he is informed that the stork has brought a new baby. The child inspects the new arrival, and expresses his opinion with decision: "The stork had better take it back again!"

I seriously declare it as my opinion that a child is able to estimate the disadvantages which he has to expect on account of a new-comer. A connection of mine, who now gets on very well with a sister, who is four years her junior, responded to the news of this sister's arrival with the reservation: "But I shan't give her my red cap, anyhow." If the child should come to realize only at a later stage that its happiness may be prejudiced by a younger brother or sister, its enmity will be aroused at this period. I know of a case where a girl, not three years of age, tried to strangle an infant in its cradle, because she suspected that its continued presence boded her no good. Children at this time of life are capable of a jealousy that is perfectly evident and extremely intense. Again, perhaps the little brother or sister really soon disappears, and the child once more draws to himself the whole affection of the household; then a new child is sent by the stork; is it not natural that the favourite should conceive the wish that the new rival may meet the same fate as the earlier one, in order that he may be as happy as he was before the birth of the first child, and during the interval after his death? Of course, this attitude of the child towards the younger brother or sister is, under normal circumstances, a mere function of the difference of age. After a certain interval the maternal instincts of the older girl will be awakened towards the helpless newborn infant.

Feelings of hostility towards brothers and sisters must occur far more frequently in children than is observed by their obtuse elders.

In the case of my own children, who followed one another rapidly, I missed the opportunity of making such observations, I am now retrieving it, thanks to my little nephew, whose undisputed domination was disturbed after fifteen months by the arrival of a feminine rival. I hear, it is true, that the young man behaves very chivalrously toward his little sister, that he kisses her hand and strokes her; but in spite of

this I have convinced myself that even before the completion of his second year he is using his new command of language to criticize this person, who, to him, after all, seems superfluous. Whenever the conversation turns upon her he chimes in, and cries angrily: "Too (l)ittle, too (l)ittle!" During the last few months, since the child has outgrown this disparagement, owing to her splendid development, he has found another reason for his insistence that she does not deserve so much attention. He reminds us, on every suitable pretext: "She hasn't any teeth." We all of us recollect the case of the eldest daughter of another sister of mine. The child, who was then six years of age, spent a full half-hour in going from one aunt to another with the question: "Lucie can't understand that yet, can she?" Lucie was her rival- two and a half years younger.

I have never failed to come across this dream of the death of brothers or sisters, denoting an intense hostility, e.g., I have met it in all my female patients. I have met with only one exception, which could easily be interpreted into a confirmation of the rule. Once, in the course of a sitting, when I was explaining this state of affairs to a female patient, since it seemed to have some bearing on the symptoms under consideration that day, she answered, to my astonishment, that she had never had such dreams. But another dream occurred to her, which presumably had nothing to do with the case - a dream which she had first dreamed at the age of four, when she was the youngest child, and had since then dreamed repeatedly. "A number of children, all her brothers and sisters with her boy and girl cousins, were romping about in a meadow. Suddenly they all grew wings, flew up, and were gone." She had no idea of the significance of this dream; but we can hardly fail to recognize it as a dream of the death of all the brothers and sisters, in its original form, and but little influenced by the censorship. I will venture to add the following analysis of it: on the death of one out of this large number of children - in this case the children of two brothers were brought up together as brothers and sisters - would not our dreamer, at that time not yet four years of age, have asked some wise, grown-up person: "What becomes of children when they are dead?" The answer would probably have been: "They grow wings and become angels." After this explanation. all the brothers and sisters and cousins in the dream now have wings, like angels and- this is the important point- they fly away. Our little angel-maker is left alone: just think, the only one out of such a crowd! That the children romp about a meadow, from which they fly away, points almost certainly to butterflies - it is as though the child had been influenced by the same association of ideas which led the ancients to imagine Psyche, the soul, with the wings of a butterfly.

Perhaps some readers will now object that the inimical impulses of children toward their brothers and sisters may perhaps be admitted, but how does the childish character arrive at such heights of wickedness as to desire the death of a rival or a stronger playmate, as though all misdeeds could be atoned for only by death? Those who speak in this fashion forget that the child's idea of being dead has little but the word in common with our own. The child knows nothing of the horrors of decay, of shivering in the cold grave, of the terror of the infinite Nothing, the thought of which the adult, as all the myths of the hereafter testify, finds so intolerable. The fear of death is alien to the child; and so he plays with the horrid word, and threatens another child: "If you do that again, you will die, just like Francis died"; at which the poor mother shudders, unable perhaps to forget that the greater proportion of mortals do not survive beyond the years of childhood. Even at the age of eight, a child returning from a

visit to a natural history museum may say to her mother: "Mamma, I do love you so; if you ever die, I am going to have you stuffed and set you up here in the room, so that I can always, always see you!" So different from our own is the childish conception of being dead.

Being dead means, for the child, who has been spared the sight of the suffering that precedes death, much the same as being gone, and ceasing to annoy the survivors. The child does not distinguish the means by which this absence is brought about, whether by distance, or estrangement, or death. If, during the child's prehistoric years, a nurse has been dismissed, and if his mother dies a little while later, the two experiences, as we discover by analysis, form links of a chain in his memory. The fact that the child does not very intensely miss those who are absent has been realized, to her sorrow, by many a mother, when she has returned home from an absence of several weeks, and has been told, upon inquiry: "The children have not asked for their mother once." But if she really departs to "that undiscovered country from whose bourne no traveller returns," the children seem at first to have forgotten her, and only subsequently do they begin to remember their dead mother.

While, therefore, the child has its motives for desiring the absence of another child, it is lacking in all those restraints which would prevent it from clothing this wish in the form of a death-wish; and the psychic reaction to dreams of a death-wish proves that, in spite of all the differences of content, the wish in the case of the child is after all identical with the corresponding wish in an adult.

If, then, the death-wish of a child in respect of his brothers and sisters is explained by his childish egoism, which makes him regard his brothers and sisters as rivals, how are we to account for the same wish in respect of his parents, who bestow their love on him, and satisfy his needs, and whose preservation he ought to desire for these very egoistical reasons?

Towards a solution of this difficulty we may be guided by our knowledge that the very great majority of dreams of the death of a parent refer to the parent of the same sex as the dreamer, so that a man generally dreams of the death of his father, and a woman of the death of her mother. I do not claim that this happens constantly; but that it happens in a great majority of cases is so evident that it requires explanation by some factor of general significance. Broadly speaking, it is as though a sexual preference made itself felt at an early age, as though the boy regarded his father, and the girl her mother, as a rival in love - by whose removal he or she could but profit.

Before rejecting this idea as monstrous, let the reader again consider the actual relations between parents and children. We must distinguish between the traditional standard of conduct, the filial piety expected in this relation, and what daily observation shows us to be the fact. More than one occasion for enmity lies hidden amidst the relations of parents and children; conditions are present in the greatest abundance under which wishes which cannot pass the censorship are bound to arise. Let us first consider the relation between father and son. In my opinion the sanctity with which we have endorsed the injunctions of the Decalogue dulls our perception of the reality. Perhaps we hardly dare permit ourselves to perceive that the greater part of humanity neglects to obey the fifth commandment. In the lowest as well as in the highest strata of human society, filial piety towards parents is wont to

recede before other interests. The obscure legends which have been handed down to us from the primeval ages of human society in mythology and folklore give a deplorable idea of the despotic power of the father, and the ruthlessness with which it was exercised. Kronos devours his children, as the wild boar devours the litter of the sow; Zeus emasculates his father and takes his place as ruler. The more tyrannically the father ruled in the ancient family, the more surely must the son, as his appointed successor, have assumed the position of an enemy, and the greater must have been his impatience to attain to supremacy through the death of his father. Even in our own middle-class families the father commonly fosters the growth of the germ of hatred which is naturally inherent in the paternal relation, by refusing to allow the son to be a free agent or by denying him the means of becoming so. A physician often has occasion to remark that a son's grief at the loss of his father cannot quench his gratification that he has at last obtained his freedom. Fathers, as a rule, cling desperately to as much of the sadly antiquated *potestas patris familias* as still survives in our modern society, and the poet who, like Ibsen, puts the immemorial strife between father and son in the foreground of his drama is sure of his effect. The causes of conflict between mother and daughter arise when the daughter grows up and finds herself watched by her mother when she longs for real sexual freedom, while the mother is reminded by the budding beauty of her daughter that for her the time has come to renounce sexual claims.

All these circumstances are obvious to everyone, but they do not help us to explain dreams of the death of their parents in persons for whom filial piety has long since come to be unquestionable. We are, however, prepared by the foregoing discussion to look for the origin of a death-wish in the earliest years of childhood.

In the case of psychoneurotics, analysis confirms this conjecture beyond all doubt. For analysis tells us that the sexual wishes of the child - in so far as they deserve this designation in their nascent state - awakened at a very early age, and that the earliest affection of the girl-child is lavished on the father, while the earliest infantile desires of the boy are directed upon the mother. For the boy the father, and for the girl the mother, becomes an obnoxious rival, and we have already shown, in the case of brothers and sisters, how readily in children this feeling leads to the death-wish. As a general rule, sexual selection soon makes its appearance in the parents; it is a natural tendency for the father to spoil his little daughters, and for the mother to take the part of the sons, while both, so long as the glamour of sex does not prejudice their judgment, are strict in training the children. The child is perfectly conscious of this partiality, and offers resistance to the parent who opposes it. To find love in an adult is for the child not merely the satisfaction of a special need; it means also that the child's will is indulged in all other respects. Thus the child is obeying its own sexual instinct, and at the same time reinforcing the stimulus proceeding from the parents, when its choice between the parents corresponds with their own.

The signs of these infantile tendencies are for the most part over-looked; and yet some of them may be observed even after the early years of childhood. An eight-year-old girl of my acquaintance, whenever her mother is called away from the table, takes advantage of her absence to proclaim herself her successor. "Now I shall be Mamma; Karl, do you want some more vegetables? Have some more, do," etc. A particularly clever and lively little girl, not yet four years of age, in whom this trait of child psychology is unusually transparent, says frankly: "Now mummy can go away; then daddy must marry

me, and I will be his wife." Nor does this wish by any means exclude the possibility that the child may most tenderly love its mother. If the little boy is allowed to sleep at his mother's side whenever his father goes on a journey, and if after his father's return he has to go back to the nursery, to a person whom he likes far less, the wish may readily arise that his father might always be absent, so that he might keep his place beside his dear, beautiful mamma; and the father's death is obviously a means for the attainment of this wish; for the child's experience has taught him that dead folks, like grandpapa, for example, are always absent; they never come back.

While such observations of young children readily accommodate themselves to the interpretation suggested, they do not, it is true, carry the complete conviction which is forced upon a physician by the psycho-analysis of adult neurotics. The dreams of neurotic patients are communicated with preliminaries of such a nature that their interpretation as wish-dreams becomes inevitable. One day I find a lady depressed and weeping. She says: "I do not want to see my relatives anymore; they must shudder at me." Thereupon, almost without any transition, she tells me that she has remembered a dream, whose significance, of course, she does not understand. She dreamed it when she was four years old, and it was this: A fox or a lynx is walking about the roof; then something falls down, or she falls down, and after that, her mother is carried out of the house - dead; whereat the dreamer weeps bitterly. I have no sooner informed her that this dream must signify a childish wish to see her mother dead, and that it is because of this dream that she thinks that her relatives must shudder at her, than she furnishes material in explanation of the dream. "Lynx-eye" is an opprobrious epithet which a street boy once bestowed on her when she was a very small child; and when she was three years old a brick or tile fell on her mother's head, so that she bled profusely.

I once had occasion to make a thorough study of a young girl who was passing through various psychic states. In the state of frenzied confusion with which her illness began, the patient manifested a quite peculiar aversion for her mother; she struck her and abused her whenever she approached the bed, while at the same period she was affectionate and submissive to a much older sister. Then there followed a lucid but rather apathetic condition, with badly disturbed sleep. It was in this phase that I began to treat her and to analyse her dreams. An enormous number of these dealt, in a more or less veiled fashion, with the death of the girl's mother; now she was present at the funeral of an old woman, now she saw herself and her sister sitting at a table, dressed in mourning; the meaning of the dreams could not be doubted. During her progressive improvement hysterical phobias made their appearance, the most distressing of which was the fear that something had happened to her mother. Wherever she might be at the time, she had then to hurry home in order to convince herself that her mother was still alive. Now this case, considered in conjunction with the rest of my experience, was very instructive; it showed, in polyglot translations, as it were, the different ways in which the psychic apparatus reacts to the same exciting idea. In the state of confusion, which I regard as an overthrow of the second psychic instance by the first instance, at other times suppressed, the unconscious enmity towards the mother gained the upper hand, and found physical expression; then, when the patient became calmer, the insurrection was suppressed, and the domination of the censorship restored, and this enmity had access only to the realms of dreams, in which it realized the wish that the mother might die; and, after the normal condition had been still further strengthened, it created the excessive concern for the mother as



a hysterical counter-reaction and defensive phenomenon. In the light of these considerations, it is no longer inexplicable why hysterical girls are so often extravagantly attached to their mothers.

On another occasion I had an opportunity of obtaining a profound insight into the unconscious psychic life of a young man for whom an obsessional neurosis made life almost unendurable, so that he could not go into the streets, because he was tormented by the fear that he would kill everyone he met. He spent his days in contriving evidence of an alibi in case he should be accused of any murder that might have been committed in the city. It goes without saying that this man was as moral as he was highly cultured. The analysis - which, by the way, led to a cure - revealed, as the basis of this distressing obsession, murderous impulses in respect of his rather overstrict father - impulses which, to his astonishment, had consciously expressed themselves when he was seven years old, but which, of course, had originated in a much earlier period of his childhood. After the painful illness and death of his father, when the young man was in his thirty-first year, the obsessive reproach made its appearance, which transferred itself to strangers in the form of this phobia. Anyone capable of wishing to push his own father from a mountain-top into an abyss cannot be trusted to spare the lives of persons less closely related to him; he therefore does well to lock himself into his room.

According to my already extensive experience, parents play a leading part in the infantile psychology of all persons who subsequently become psychoneurotics. Falling in love with one parent and hating the other forms part of the permanent stock of the psychic impulses which arise in early childhood, and are of such importance as the material of the subsequent neurosis. But I do not believe that psychoneurotics are to be sharply distinguished in this respect from other persons who remain normal - that is, I do not believe that they are capable of creating something absolutely new and peculiar to themselves. It is far more probable - and this is confirmed by incidental observations of normal children - that in their amorous or hostile attitude toward their parents, psychoneurotics do no more than reveal to us, by magnification, something that occurs less markedly and intensively in the minds of the majority of children. Antiquity has furnished us with legendary matter which corroborates this belief, and the profound and universal validity of the old legends is explicable only by an equally universal validity of the above-mentioned hypothesis of infantile psychology.

I am referring to the legend of King Oedipus and the Oedipus Rex of Sophocles. Oedipus, the son of Laius, king of Thebes, and Jocasta, is exposed as a suckling, because an oracle had informed the father that his son, who was still unborn, would be his murderer. He is rescued, and grows up as a king's son at a foreign court, until, being uncertain of his origin, he, too, consults the oracle, and is warned to avoid his native place, for he is destined to become the murderer of his father and the husband of his mother. On the road leading away from his supposed home he meets King Laius, and in a sudden quarrel strikes him dead. He comes to Thebes, where he solves the riddle of the Sphinx, who is barring the way to the city, whereupon he is elected king by the grateful Thebans, and is rewarded with the hand of Jocasta. He reigns for many years in peace and honour, and begets two sons and two daughters upon his unknown mother, until at last a plague breaks out - which causes the Thebians to consult the oracle anew. Here Sophocles' tragedy begins. The messengers bring the reply that the plague will stop as soon as the murderer of Laius is driven from the country. But where is he?

Where shall be found,  
Faint, and hard to be known, the trace of the ancient guilt?

The action of the play consists simply in the disclosure, approached step by step and artistically delayed (and comparable to the work of a psycho-analysis) that Oedipus himself is the murderer of Laius, and that he is the son of the murdered man and Jocasta. Shocked by the abominable crime which he has unwittingly committed, Oedipus blinds himself, and departs from his native city. The prophecy of the oracle has been fulfilled.

The Oedipus Rex is a tragedy of fate; its tragic effect depends on the conflict between the all-powerful will of the gods and the vain efforts of human beings threatened with disaster; resignation to the divine will, and the perception of one's own impotence is the lesson which the deeply moved spectator is supposed to learn from the tragedy. Modern authors have therefore sought to achieve a similar tragic effect by expressing the same conflict in stories of their own invention. But the playgoers have looked on unmoved at the unavailing efforts of guiltless men to avert the fulfillment of curse or oracle; the modern tragedies of destiny have failed of their effect.

If the Oedipus Rex is capable of moving a modern reader or playgoer no less powerfully than it moved the contemporary Greeks, the only possible explanation is that the effect of the Greek tragedy does not depend upon the conflict between fate and human will, but upon the peculiar nature of the material by which this conflict is revealed. There must be a voice within us which is prepared to acknowledge the compelling power of fate in the Oedipus, while we are able to condemn the situations occurring in Die Ahnfrau or other tragedies of fate as arbitrary inventions. And there actually is a motive in the story of King Oedipus which explains the verdict of this inner voice. His fate moves us only because it might have been our own, because the oracle laid upon us before our birth the very curse which rested upon him. It may be that we were all destined to direct our first sexual impulses toward our mothers, and our first impulses of hatred and violence toward our fathers; our dreams convince us that we were. King Oedipus, who slew his father Laius and wedded his mother Jocasta, is nothing more or less than a wish-fulfillment- the fulfillment of the wish of our childhood. But we, more fortunate than he, in so far as we have not become psychoneurotics, have since our childhood succeeded in withdrawing our sexual impulses from our mothers, and in forgetting our jealousy of our fathers. We recoil from the person for whom this primitive wish of our childhood has been fulfilled with all the force of the repression which these wishes have undergone in our minds since childhood. As the poet brings the guilt of Oedipus to light by his investigation, he forces us to become aware of our own inner selves, in which the same impulses are still extant, even though they are suppressed. The antithesis with which the chorus departs:

...Behold, this is Oedipus, Who unravelled the great riddle, and was first in power,  
Whose fortune all the townsmen praised and envied; See in what dread adversity he  
sank!

- this admonition touches us and our own pride, we who, since the years of our childhood, have grown so wise and so powerful in our own estimation. Like Oedipus, we live in ignorance of the desires that offend morality, the desires that nature has forced upon us and after their unveiling we may well prefer to avert our gaze from the scenes of our childhood.

In the very text of Sophocles' tragedy there is an unmistakable reference to the fact that the Oedipus legend had its source in dream-material of immemorial antiquity, the content of which was the painful disturbance of the child's relations to its parents caused by the first impulses of sexuality. Jocasta comforts Oedipus- who is not yet enlightened, but is troubled by the recollection of the oracle - by an allusion to a dream which is often dreamed, though it cannot, in her opinion, mean anything: -

For many a man hath seen himself in dreams  
His mother's mate, but he who gives no  
heed To suchlike matters bears the easier life.

- The dream of having sexual intercourse with one's mother was as common then as it is today with many people, who tell it with indignation and astonishment. As may well be imagined, it is the key to the tragedy and the complement to the dream of the death of the father. The Oedipus fable is the reaction of phantasy to these two typical dreams, and just as such a dream, when occurring to an adult, is experienced with feelings of aversion, so the content of the fable must include terror and self-chastisement. The form which it subsequently assumed was the result of an uncomprehending secondary elaboration of the material, which sought to make it serve a theological intention. The attempt to reconcile divine omnipotence with human responsibility must, of course, fail with this material as with any other.

Another of the great poetic tragedies, Shakespeare's Hamlet, is rooted in the same soil as Oedipus Rex. But the whole difference in the psychic life of the two widely separated periods of civilization, and the progress, during the course of time, of repression in the emotional life of humanity, is manifested in the differing treatment of the same material. In Oedipus Rex the basic wish-phantasy of the child is brought to light and realized as it is in dreams; in Hamlet it remains repressed, and we learn of its existence - as we discover the relevant facts in a neurosis - only through the inhibitory effects which proceed from it. In the more modern drama, the curious fact that it is possible to remain in complete uncertainty as to the character of the hero has proved to be quite consistent with the over-powering effect of the tragedy. The play is based upon Hamlet's hesitation in accomplishing the task of revenge assigned to him; the text does not give the cause or the motive of this hesitation, nor have the manifold attempts at interpretation succeeded in doing so. According to the still prevailing conception, a conception for which Goethe was first responsible. Hamlet represents the type of man whose active energy is paralyzed by excessive intellectual activity: "Sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought." According to another conception. the poet has endeavoured to portray a morbid, irresolute character, on the verge of neurasthenia. The plot of the drama, however, shows us that Hamlet is by no means intended to appear as a character wholly incapable of action. On two separate occasions we see him assert himself: once in a sudden outburst of rage, when he stabs the eavesdropper behind the arras, and on the other occasion when he deliberately, and even craftily, with the complete unscrupulousness of a prince of the

Renaissance, sends the two courtiers to the death which was intended for himself. What is it, then, that inhibits him in accomplishing the task which his father's ghost has laid upon him? Here the explanation offers itself that it is the peculiar nature of this task. Hamlet is able to do anything but take vengeance upon the man who did away with his father and has taken his father's place with his mother - the man who shows him in realization the repressed desires of his own childhood. The loathing which should have driven him to revenge is thus replaced by self-reproach, by conscientious scruples, which tell him that he himself is no better than the murderer whom he is required to punish. I have here translated into consciousness what had to remain unconscious in the mind of the hero; if anyone wishes to call Hamlet an hysterical subject I cannot but admit that this is the deduction to be drawn from my interpretation. The sexual aversion which Hamlet expresses in conversation with Ophelia is perfectly consistent with this deduction - the same sexual aversion which during the next few years was increasingly to take possession of the poet's soul, until it found its supreme utterance in *Timon of Athens*. It can, of course, be only the poet's own psychology with which we are confronted in Hamlet; and in a work on Shakespeare by Georg Brandes (1896) I find the statement that the drama was composed immediately after the death of Shakespeare's father (1601) - that is to say, when he was still mourning his loss, and during a revival, as we may fairly assume, of his own childish feelings in respect of his father. It is known, too, that Shakespeare's son, who died in childhood, bore the name of Hamnet (identical with Hamlet). Just as Hamlet treats of the relation of the son to his parents, so *Macbeth*, which was written about the same period, is based upon the theme of childlessness. Just as all neurotic symptoms, like dreams themselves, are capable of hyper-interpretation, and even require such hyper-interpretation before they become perfectly intelligible, so every genuine poetical creation must have proceeded from more than one motive, more than one impulse in the mind of the poet, and must admit of more than one interpretation. I have here attempted to interpret only the deepest stratum of impulses in the mind of the creative poet.

With regard to typical dreams of the death of relatives, I must add a few words upon their significance from the point of view of the theory of dreams in general. These dreams show us the occurrence of a very unusual state of things; they show us that the dream-thought created by the repressed wish completely escapes the censorship, and is transferred to the dream without alteration. Special conditions must obtain in order to make this possible. The following two factors favour the production of these dreams: first, this is the last wish that we could credit ourselves with harbouring; we believe such a wish "would never occur to us even in a dream"; the dream-censorship is therefore unprepared for this monstrosity, just as the laws of Solon did not foresee the necessity of establishing a penalty for patricide. Secondly, the repressed and unsuspected wish is, in this special case, frequently met half-way by a residue from the day's experience, in the form of some concern for the life of the beloved person. This anxiety cannot enter into the dream otherwise than by taking advantage of the corresponding wish; but the wish is able to mask itself behind the concern which has been aroused during the day. If one is inclined to think that all this is really a very much simpler process, and to imagine that one merely continues during the night, and in one's dream, what was begun during the day, one removes the dreams of the death of those dear to us out of all connection with the general explanation of dreams, and a problem that may very well be solved remains a problem needlessly.

It is instructive to trace the relation of these dreams to anxiety-dreams. In dreams of the death of those dear to us the repressed wish has found a way of avoiding the censorship- and the distortion for which the censorship is responsible. An invariable concomitant phenomenon then, is that painful emotions are felt in the dream. Similarly, an anxiety-dream occurs only when the censorship is entirely or partially overpowered, and on the other hand, the overpowering of the censorship is facilitated when the actual sensation of anxiety is already present from somatic sources. It thus becomes obvious for what purpose the censorship performs its office and practises dream-distortion; it does so in order to prevent the development of anxiety or other forms of painful affect.

[ . . . ] All dreams are absolutely egoistical; in every dream the beloved ego appears, even though in a disguised form. The wishes that are realized in dreams are invariably the wishes of this ego; it is only a deceptive appearance if interest in another person is believed to have evoked a dream.



Salvador Dalí, *Oedipe et le sphinx*, 1960-55