

THE BOSTON PSYCHOANALYTIC SOCIETY AND INSTITUTE, INC.

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DREAMING AND THE ONEIRIC PARADIGM
Seminar Year III, Winter 2017

Instructor: Jack Foehl, Ph.D., ABPP

The distinction between the real and the oneiric cannot be identical with the simple distinction between consciousness filled with meaning and consciousness given up to its own void. The two modalities impinge on one another. Our waking relations with objects and others especially have an oneiric character as a matter of principle: others are present to us in the way that dreams are, the way myths are, and this is enough to question the cleavage between the real and the imaginary. -- Merleau-Ponty

Freud wrote that the dream “appears to be a reaction to everything which is simultaneously present as actual in the sleeping mind” (*S.E. V*, p. 589). An individual unconsciously takes memories of the day or in the course of a life and arranges them in accordance with desire, finds a language for that desire and expresses the symbolic weight of desire through the lens of metaphor and metonymy (condensation and displacement) in the image.

For Bion, the dream work, known initially as dream-work α and then as α function, is active in both sleep and waking. α function transforms β elements, proto-sensorial or proto-emotional fragments into dream-thoughts, α elements that are the building blocks of experience, narrative and thinking. α function emerges from the body. This is a transformation in sleep or wakefulness where dream images are no longer something to be deciphered but are the symbol-poetic activity of the individual, the creation and development of an experience. The dream doesn't hide, it reveals. Attention shifts from the dream to the dreaming process.

In this seminar, we will explore this transformation in the concept of dreaming called “The Oneiric Paradigm.” We will examine the ways in which our understanding of dreams shapes our clinical experiences of them, looking at various models of dream formation and interpretation, from *The Interpretation of Dreams*, to contemporary views of dreaming as part of an analytic or phenomenal field.

Each week, I'll provide a brief contextualization for the readings, and we will discuss, raise questions or relate experiences that can clarify or elucidate the readings. If you will, select key passages for the reading that you wish to offer for exploration. Each week we'll also discuss a dream from our clinical process. I hope that this combination of theoretical and clinical discussion will create animated conversations that will inform our dream work.

There are two small writing assignments: **For the first class**, write a paragraph describing your current theory of dreams. **For the last class**, repeat this first assignment.

1. February 9, 2017: Sigmund Freud

Readings:

Freud, S., (1900) An analysis of a Specimen Dream, Chapter 2, The Interpretation of Dreams. *S.E.* IV: 96-121. [PEP Web Link](#)

Freud, S. (1911) The Handling of Dream Interpretation in Psychoanalysis. *S.E.* XII: 89-96. [PEP Web Link](#)

Freud, S. (1923) Remarks on the Theory and Practice of Dream Interpretation, *S.E.* XIX: 109-126 ([PEP Web Link](#)); Some Additional Notes on Dream Interpretation As a Whole, 127-134 ([PEP Web Link](#)).

Learning Objective: At the completion of the session, the candidate will be able to characterize Freud's understanding of the function of dreams and his process of uncovering the latent meaning as it is both represented and disguised in the manifest content.

2. February 16, 2017: Carl Jung

Readings:

Jung, C. G. (1974). On the nature of dreams. In *Dreams*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press pp. 67-83. (Original work published, 1945). [Available upon [Request from the Library](#)]

Jung, C. G. (1974). The practical use of dream analysis. In *Dreams*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, pp. 87-109. (Original work published, 1934). [Available upon [Request from the Library](#)]

Learning Objective: At the completion of the session, the candidate will be able to differentiate Freud's and Jung's understanding of dreams and their approaches to the analysis of dreams.

3. February 23, 2017: Erik Erikson

Readings:

Erikson, E. (1954) The dream specimen of Psychoanalysis, *JAPA*: 2:5-56. [PEP Web Link](#)

Levine, H. B. (1998). Erik Erikson's Dream Specimen Paper: A Classic Revisited, *Psychoanalytic Study of the Child*, 53: 25-42. [PEP Web Link](#)

Learning Objective: At the completion of this session, the candidate will be able to articulate Erik Erikson's theories and technique of dream interpretation.

4. March 2, 2017: Wilfred Bion

Readings:

Bion, W. R. (1962). *Learning from Experience*, Chapter 3 and Chapter 7. In *The Complete Works of W. R. Bion, Vol. IV*, ed. C. Mawson. London: Karnac, pp. 274-275 and pp. 283-284. [Available upon [Request from the Library](#)]

Bion, W. R. (1992) *Cogitations*, ed. F. Bion. London: Karnac. (read pp. 37-54). [Available upon [Request from the Library](#)]

Grotstein, J. S. (2007). Chapter 25: What Does it mean to Dream? Bion's Theory of Dreaming. In: *A Beam of Intense Darkness: Wilfred Bion's Legacy to Psychoanalysis*, London: Karnac, pp.259-289. [Available upon [Request from the Library](#)]

Optional:

Grotstein, J. S. (2007). Chapter 26: Dreaming, Phantasizing, and the "truth instinct". In: *A Beam of Intense Darkness: Wilfred Bion's Legacy to Psychoanalysis*, London: Karnac, pp. 290-304. [Available upon [Request from the Library](#)]

Learning Objective: At the completion of the session, the candidate will be able to differentiate Bion's "revolution" in his theory of dreaming from prior conceptualizations.

5. March 9, 2017: Thomas Ogden

Readings:

Ogden, T. H. (2001). Conversations at the frontier of dreaming. *Fort Da*, 7: 7-14. [PEP Web Link](#)

Ogden, T. H. (2003). On not being able to dream. *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 84: 17-30. [PEP Web Link](#)

Ogden, T. H. (2004). This art of psychoanalysis: Dreaming undreamt dreams and interrupted cries. *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 85: 857-877. [PEP Web Link](#)

Optional:

Borges, J. L. (1998). Funes, his memory. In: *Collected Fictions*. New York: Viking, pp. 131-137 (Original work published, 1944). [Available upon [Request from the Library](#)]

Learning Objective: At the completion of the session, the candidate will be able to differentiate dreaming from not dreaming in Ogden's formulations.

6. March 16, 2017: Edgar Levenson and Philip Bromberg**Readings:**

Levenson, E. A. (1972). *The Fallacy of Understanding: An Inquiry into the Changing Structure of Psychoanalysis*. Chapter 13: "They Became What They Beheld," Transformation Elaborated. New York: Basic Books, pp. 181-196. [Available upon [Request from the Library](#)]

Bromberg, P. M. (2000). Bringing in the dreamer: Some reflections on dreamwork, surprise, and analytic process. *Contemporary Psychoanalysis*, 36: 685-705. [PEP Web Link](#)

Learning Objective: At the completion of this seminar, participants will be able to describe Levenson's and Bromberg's Interpersonal/Relational approach to dreams.

7. March 23, 2017: Antonino Ferro and Giuseppe Civitarese**Readings:**

Ferro, A. (1999). Chapter five: The waking dream: Theoretical and clinical aspects. In: *Psychoanalysis as Therapy and Storytelling*. London: Routledge, pp. 51-65. [Available upon [Request from the Library](#)]

Civitaresse, G. (2011). Exploring core concepts: Sexuality, dreams and the unconscious. *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 92: 277-280. [PEP Web Link](#)

Civitaresse, G. (2014) Chapter nine: Are dreams still the guardians of sleep? In: *The Necessary Dream: New Theories and Techniques of Interpretation in Psychoanalysis*. London: Karnac, pp. 187-202. [Available upon [Request from the Library](#)]

Learning Objective: At the completion of the session, the candidate will be able to elucidate the field concept in relation to dreaming.

8. March 30, 2017: Maurice Merleau-Ponty**Reading:**

Morley, J. (1999). The sleeping subject: Merleau-Ponty on dreaming. *Theory and Psychology*, 9(1): 89-101. [Available upon [Request from the Library](#)]

Learning Objective: At the completion of the session, the candidate will be able to describe Merleau-Ponty's non-dualistic approach to oneiric phenomena.