NOTE ON THE SCIENTIFICITY OF FREUD'S INTERPRETATION OF DREAMS

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In Chapter I of Conjectures and Refutations, K. Popper raises the question of the scientificity of certain theories, which he then proceeds to reject as unscientific on the basis of the now celebrated criterion of falsifiability. Freud's is one of these theories. (Those of Marx and Adler are the other two with which he finds particular fault.) He tells us that what his friends who supported Marx, Freud and Adler were impressed by was the apparent explanatory power of their theories, and that it was precisely this feature which he himself came to find least impressive. The argument is by now pretty familiar and need only be stated briefly: a theory's claim to be scientific (as opposed to 'pre-scientific' or mythological, however informative it in fact may be) stands or falls on the possibility of its being refuted by the appearance of new disconfirming evidence. A theory is scientific if it can become incompatible with certain possible results of observation. Psychoanalysis, he claims, is not such a theory since it reads all evidence as confirmatory of its theory, rather than testing it, whereas 'every genuine test of a theory is an attempt to falsify it, or to refute it'. Since the 'clinical observations' which analysts naively believe confirm their study are both interpreted in the light of 'previous experience' and at the same time allowed to count as additional confirmation of that experience, Popper concludes that they do not differ in kind from the daily confirmations which astrologers find in their practice; and as for Freud's epic of the Ego, the Super-Ego and the Id, 'no substantially stronger claim to scientific status can be made for it than for Homer's collected stories from Olympus'.

More recently, a philosopher of quite different political allegiance, namely the Marxist S. Timpanaro (1), has applied what is essentially the Popperian criterion to psychoanalysis, and found the latter wanting. He again argues that any theory's claim to scientificity depends on its susceptibility to empirical testing and to falsification by counter evidence. Psychoanalysis, and in particular its theory of the dream and of the 'slip', unlike Marxism, fails to apply such tests sufficiently and manipulates whatever counter-evidence it encounters to the end of preserving its own self-consistency as theory.

In a recent group reading of The Interpretation of Dreams, what impressed many of us, as in the case of Popper's friends, was the explanatory force of Freud's work: it did, indeed, seem able to account for more of the features of dreaming than any other attempt at interpretation. What also troubled many of us, and to a large extent precisely because of (rather than despite) this explanatory value, was its status as scientific. The starting point was neither a commitment to Karl Popper nor an a-critical admiration for Freud. We were, by and large, and pace Popper, probably as good an instance as any of the 'public character of scientific method' in the sense that our stance was un-biased, if not positively challenging. The only problem, of course, was that as good and challenging scientists we had no business to be wasting our time on a mythography.

These notes are based on discussion in the reading group (2) (to which I am indebted) and on my own thoughts. Their overall purpose is to examine the scientific credentials of Freud's interpretation of dreams in the light of the contradiction between the conviction lent by that theory and its failure to submit to the canons of empiricist theories of scientificity.

In speaking of 'notes' I intend to indicate the very limited character of what I have to offer and to provide some kind of excuse or justification for the rather spontaneous and unrelated mode in which I present it. This is to do with the fact that it was inspired by questions that arose in the reading-group discussion, and is almost exclusively addressed to them. Hence no attempt is made to relate it to studies by Timpanaro and others (3) of Freud's theory. It goes without saying that anything approaching an adequate and substantial treatment of these questions would need to be much more cognizant of the framework of reference that those studies provide.

In the interests of clarity, rather than because the issues involved are really that separate, I shall distinguish three areas for discussion. All emerged as dominant themes in the course of the reading group; that they are epistemological concerns is no doubt a reflection of the fact that the group was mainly composed of philosophers.

The three areas are:

1 Freud's claim that the motive force of every dream, despite appearances to the contrary, is a wish-fulfilment. We have a classic case here, presumably, of everything that a Popperian finds wrong with psychoanalytic theory: no cases are allowed to be disconfirming of the theory, and even the apparent exceptions are appropriated by it in a

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2 The group was mainly composed of students at the University of Sussex and met on a weekly basis. Discussion was quite informal, there being no preparation for any session apart from a reading of the particular section of the text - which was usually some 50 pages in length. We made no use of secondary material. The group was dominated by those interested in the epistemological implications of Freud's approach to his object of study (what the nature of that object signified for the appropriateness of a given methodology etc.), but it was interesting, and I think significant, that a number of members of the group were critical of that emphasis and would have preferred to approach the text from a more psychological stance, seeing the more interesting questions as to with the extent to which their own feelings and intuitions about dreaming were confirmed/disconfirmed by Freud's theory.


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(1) Wish-fulfilment

I shall approach the question of wish-fulfilment firstly from within the Popperian framework, and secondly from outside it. That is to say, I shall first present a certain amount of evidence to show that in the development of his theory of wish-fulfilment Freud proceeds with more scientific caution and more respect for empirical data and the relevance of its potentially falsifying quality than the summary dismissal of the Popperians would suggest. I do not place that much weight on this evidence, all of which I imagine a hardened adherent of falsificationism might want to argue could be explained as Freud's paying lip-service to the empiricist tradition, as hypocritical padding that does not significantly affect the question of the intransigence of his theory to falsification. I cite it because I personally think it does mitigate against the kind of instant rejection that Popper claims we can make of Freud's work - because it ought in all fairness to be taken into account in any consideration of Freud's contribution, and very seldom is. However, I place more weight on my second line of defence of Freud's 'scientificity'. Here too, I shall argue that Freud is far more empirical than speculative in his approach, but I shall do so by posing the question of the extent to which the data dealt with by Freud could be more adequately and plausibly dealt with in terms of a theory other than his own.

(1) How badly does Freud fail the Popperian test?

I shall here only offer a few quotations and point to certain modifications that Freud introduces to his basic thesis that every dream is a wish-fulfilment.

Freud is first brought to posit this thesis as a result of his dream of 'Irma's injection' - the first which he submitted to detailed examination. The Irma of the dream was a patient of Freud's whose treatment had not been entirely successful, a fact for which Otto, one of his colleagues, had, in waking life, reproached Freud. Freud subsequently dreams that Otto had administered an injection to Irma and that her symptoms were attributable to that. The overall message that Freud elicits from his lengthy and complex interpretation is that the dream fulfilled his desire to revenge himself for his colleague's reproaches in the discovery that it was Otto, and not himself, who was responsible for the persistence of Irma's pains. He thus suggests that the content of the dream was the fulfilment of a wish and its motive was a wish. He then puts aside questions as to the origin and 'puzzling' form in which the wish-fulfilment is expressed in order to pursue the path opened up by this dream (i.e. in order to consider the universality of the hypothesis based on it). He writes:

'We have learnt that a dream can represent a wish as fulfilled. Our first concern must be to enquire whether this is a universal characteristic of dreams or whether it merely happened to be the content of the particular dream... which was the first that we analysed. For even if we are prepared to find that every dream has a meaning and a psychical value, the possibility must remain open of this meaning not being the same in every dream. Our first dream was the fulfilment of a wish; a second one might turn out to be a fulfilled fear; the content of a third might be a reflection; while a fourth might merely reproduce a memory. Shall we find other wishful dreams besides this one? Or are there perhaps no dreams but wishful ones? (4)

Freud then looks at some more empirical evidence, all of which appears to substantiate his tentative hypothesis. First there are the 'dreams of convenience' (e.g. the dream of drinking when one is in fact thirsty; the dream of menstruating when it is a fact that the dreamer has missed her period). Such dreams would appear to be undisguised expressions of wishes. It would be difficult to give an account of them that did not refer to a wishful impulse. Secondly Freud cites the dreams of his own two children (his son, who in fact failed to reach the Simony Institute in the course of a mountain climb the previous day, reports that he climbed up to the hut in his dream; his daughter, who was forbidden to eat strawberries during the day, dreams of eating them etc.) Of course, it could be claimed that there is no necessary causal connexion between the thirst, the missed period, the previous day's events and the dreamers' dreams, and that therefore the latter are not expressions of wishes but merely indifferent in their content. But surely it is more empirical to proceed on the basis that the coincidence between fact and dream suggests a causal connexion than to dispute it? Thirdly, Freud appeals to the 'common sense' evidence of linguistic usage (I would never
have imagined such a thing in my wildest dreams'; 'what do geese dream of?' asks the proverb, and it replies 'of maize'). At this point it might seem that Freud had done no more than any other scientist might legitimately do in establishing a working hypothesis (i.e. considered certain evidence that suggests its workability).

Then comes the first instance of apparent dis-confirmation of the thesis - the 'distressing' dream, anxiety dreams. Freud of course accounts for them by introducing the distinction between the manifest dream content and the latent dream thought, and the concept of 'distortion'. He argues that they too are motivated by wishes, but in their case there has been an attempt to thwart the expression of the wish. Dreams are now hypothesised to be the result of two psychical forces or agents, the one responsible for formulating the wish, the other exercising censorship on it and forcing its expression into distorted form. At this point the empiricist might argue that Freud has entered the realms of speculation, for the latent wish that is posited clearly does not have the same credentials for being counted as a wish as is the case with the undisguised wish-fulfilment dreams. That is to say, the connexion between the dream and the events of the previous day or with the kind of neuro-physiological conditions that are represented by the missed period or experience of thirst, is not self-evident. What right, then, has Freud to call it a wish, or even to posit its existence, since the only evidence we have is the exact opposite of gratification (i.e. a disagreeable feeling of anxiety)? And he might proceed to argue that given this evidence, Freud should at that point have abandoned his hypothesis, and that the manifest/latent distinction, the notions of censorship, distortion etc are all devices introduced to preserve the 'theory' of wish-fulfilment. I attempt to argue against such suggestions in (1)(b). Here I shall only note that if it is true that distressing dreams have been accommodated within the wish-fulfilment thesis, it is equally true that they have been the cause of a significant modification of that thesis: 'We shall be taking into account everything that has been brought to light by our analysis of unpleasurable dreams if we make the following modification in the formula in which we sought to express the nature of dreams: a dream is a (disguised) fulfilment of a (suppressed) wish.' (5)

Moreover, Freud proceeds to consider the case of anxiety dreams as a special sub-species of distressing dreams. The displeasure felt in the distressing dream is caused by the fact that a repressed wish beats the censor opposing it and this defeat finds expression as unpleasant. Now some anxiety dreams may arise similarly. But they may also arise from psycho-sexual excitation, in which case the anxiety corresponds to repressed libido and the anxiety 'like the whole anxiety-dream, has the significance of a neurotic symptom, and we come near the limit at wish the wish-fulfilling purpose of dreams breaks down'. Such dreams are tantamount to a break-down in the normal process of dreaming; they fail to perform its proper function - for reasons which have nothing to do with the psychology of the dream but rather with that of the neuroses. Freud treats them not as exceptions to the rule of wish-fulfilment but as lying outside the confines of dream theory. He writes: 'If it were not for the fact that our topic is connected with the subject of the generation of anxiety by the single factor of the liberation of the Ucs during sleep, I should be able to omit any discussion of anxiety dreams and avoid the necessity for entering in these pages into all the obscurities surrounding them.' And even more emphatically in the footnote added in 1911: 'Anxiety in dreams, I should like to insist, is an anxiety problem, and not a dream problem.' Has Freud refused a 'falsification' of his theory in anxiety dreams, or could it not be that his recognition of them as different serves to limit and specify the dream theory - not to falsify it but to give it greater precision and a more restricted area of applicability? At the very least, it has to be recognized that Freud does not try to accommodate anxiety dreams wholly within the confines of dream-theory; that he is aware of the extent to which wish-fulfillment is inadequate in itself to contain and 'explain them fully, and that in doing this, rather than reading what he wants into the empirical data, he has remained obedient to his dictates (i.e. to the fact that different phenomena have presented themselves not all of which can be subsumed and assimilated under a single hypothesis).

Punishment dreams represent the second apparent major 'counter-example' to the wish-fulfilment thesis. Of them Freud writes: '... their recognition means in a certain sense a new addition to the theory of dreams,' and in a couple of sentences added in 1911: 'I should have no objection to this class of dreams being classed as wish-fulfillment', "punishment" dreams under the name of 'punishment dreams'. I should not regard this as implying any qualification of the theory of dreams which I have hitherto put forward; it would be no more than a linguistic expedient for meeting the difficulties of those who find it strange that opposites should converge.' Again, it might be argued, we have a clear case of Freud refusing a 'falsification' of his thesis. But let us note that the punishment dream is in its turn the occasion for a significant modification and correction to his earlier formulation of wish-fulfilment. Hitherto he has supposed that the motive force for the dream must be provided by a wish belonging to the Ucs; now he distinguishes punishment dreams from the 'wish-fulfillment' dreams under the name of 'punishment dreams'. In concluding this section, I suggest that the pre- assumption of a Popperian type argument against the wish-fulfilment theory is that Freud develops a hypothesis, based on the confirmation of simple cases, that is fairly clear-cut and definite - and thus correctly vulnerable to falsification - and then proceeds, unscientifically, to distort and manipulate the hypothesis in the face of apparently disconfirming evidence. But an alternative interpretation of his procedure will recognize that at the start of his analysis the hypothesis of wish-fulfilment is of the most tenuous and vague character; it is by no means fully formed and emerges as a theory only towards the end of his work as a result of his studies of a whole body of data by which it has been

6 Note that in allowing that in the case of punishment dreams the wish emanates from the agency of the censorship, Freud contradicts his earlier insistence (when discussing anxiety dreams) that the wish always emanates from the Ucs. He points this out in a footnote added in 1910, where he further writes 'It is because patho-analysis has divided the personality into an ego and super-ego that it has been so reasonable in these punishment dreams fulfills the wishes of the super-ego. Nevertheless, even the punishment dream presupposes the repressed unconscious wish against which the super-ego reacts, and over which it gains dominance. See SE IV, p473ff; V IV, p104ff and SE IV, p571ff, V IV, p10ff.
shaped, determined and limited. Thus to approach the analysis of dreams as if Freud should present us with theory right from the start which will then circumscribe that facts it can accommodate, is to miss the point; it is to be blind to what is arguably precisely the scientific aspect of Freud's progress. For it is in the process of qualification itself that the theory emerges from pre-theory; it is in the light of the empirical evidence of many differing types of dream that it becomes constituted. The analytic progress to which we are witness is not from hypothesis to fact to confirmation of (unchanged) hypothesis, but from fact to (tentative) hypothesis to (qualified) hypothesis. We should also note that in the course of constructing this qualified hypothesis Freud has been forced to substantiate his claims by reference to discoveries outside the area of dream-theory. Freud's 'proof' that dreams are wish-fulfilments is not, and could not have been, based simply on an analysis of dreams. But nor, on the other hand, is the dream simply an instance of an already developed theory, a mere exemplification, since the dream is also a crucial part of the raw material for the development of the theory. The construction of the doctrine is thus piece-meal and a process of constant cross-reference in which discoveries made in many differing examinations of psychic processes are related to one another, the theory modified and expanded as a result of the relating. Freud himself could scarcely have been more aware of this, and The Interpretation of Dreams is full of testimonies to his concern both to validate a theory which he knows full well depends for its credibility on his discoveries in fields other than dreaming, and at the same time to keep within the bounds of his direct subject matter.

He himself is the best spokesman in this regard: 'There is no possibility of explaining dreams as a psychical process, since to explain a thing means to trace it back to something already known, and there is at the present time no established psychological knowledge under which we could subsume what the psychological examination of dreams enables us to infer as a basis for their explanation. On the contrary, we shall be obliged to set up a number of fresh hypotheses which touch tentatively upon the structure of the apparatus of the mind and upon the play of forces operating in it. We must be careful not to pursue these hypotheses too far beyond their first logical links, or their value will be lost in uncertainties. Even if we make no false inferences and take all the logical possibilities into account, the probable incompleteness of our premises threatens to bring our calculations to a complete miscarriage. No conclusions upon the construction and working methods of the mental instrument can be arrived at or at least fully proved from even the most painstaking investigation of dreams or of any other mental function taken in isolation. To achieve this result, it will be necessary to correlate all the established implications derived from a comparative study of a whole series of such functions. Thus the psychological hypotheses to which we are led by an analysis of the process of dreaming must be left, as it were in suspense until they can be related to the findings of other enquiries which seek to approach the kernel of the same problem from another angle.' (7)

These are hardly the words of a dogmatist bent on constraining all empirical data within the limits of a pre-conceived theory.

(1)(b) The adequacy of the theory

It might be objected that the arguments adduced above are not convincing, or at any rate wrong-footed, and that in justifying the 'empirical' and 'scientific' nature of Freud's procedure I have only served to show the extent to which it does not, and cannot be made to, conform with that demanded by Popper. But if my arguments have at least lent conviction to the claim that Freud's progress is obedient to empirical data and non-dogmatic, then we can justifiably entertain some scepticism about the worth of the Popperian criterion, and move to the question of the extent to which Freud must necessarily fail the Popperian test in order to remain faithful to, and to produce an adequate knowledge of the data he is studying. I shall examine this question by looking at the tractability of that data to explanations other than Freud's.

After citing the dream 'A child is burning' (in which a father dreams that his recently dead child is still alive - the full content of the dream need not detain us), Freud says that if we eliminate the wish-fulfilment only two features are left to distinguish the dream from waking thoughts: (i) the thought is transformed into sensory images and (ii) it uses the present tense. As regards (ii), Freud claims 'we need not linger over this peculiarity of dreams' and compares it to the same device used in day-dreaming. His argument here directs us immediately to the essential connexion between this aspect of dreaming and the fact that the dream is a wish-fulfilment: 'The present tense is the one in which dreams are represented as fulfilled.'

The argument is, of course, tautological: if a wish is fulfilled in a dream (as opposed to merely being wished) then the dream has no alternative but to transfer the optative and future tense into the present. Thus, in the dream of Irma's injection the optative 'If only Otto were responsible for Irma's illness' becomes 'Yes, Otto is responsible'. But there are two sides to this issue. The critic of Freud might cite the tautological nature of the argument as further instance of Freud's 'seeing what he wants to see' - or the ineligibility of his method to falsifiability - on the grounds that the fact that the dream takes place in the present tense is used by Freud as proof that the dream is wish-fulfilment. On the other hand, it has to be recognized that dreams do take place in the present tense and this is an empirical fact about them which therefore stands in need of explanation in any theory of dreaming.

Now the fact that it is often possible to establish a relationship between a waking event or thought and the material of the dream, suggests that this would be a starting point for any explanation. Let us take the simple case of Freud's son who dreams of reaching the Simony Hutte after failing to do so the previous day. That he attempted to reach the hut in waking life, and that he achieves his ambition in sleep are two undeniable facts. In this very simple case we are not even dependent upon the dreamer's own account of his waking experience, since Freud himself accompanied the child on the mountain walk. In other words, the connexion between the events is not simply made by the dreamer but something that must strike one objectively. Now is it not legitimate to try to make sense of the 'coincidence' of the waking ambition and the

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7 S. Freud, SE IV, p511; P IV, pp864-5.
dream achievement - granted, that is, that we are interested at all in considerations of the connexion between them - on the basis that the dream's representation of a scene in the present of a scene experienced in waking-life as a future desideratum speaks of its wish-fulfilling function. Why must we accept the suggestion that it is only the prior hypothesis of wish-fulfillment that alone allows the explanation of the present tense of the dream thought? Why should the theory of dreaming be related to only in terms of its confirmation of an already established theory rather than as evidence for the construction of that theory?

It might be argued against this: that the child's dream is wish-fulfilling tells us nothing about other dreams, particularly those apparently most intransigent to a theory of wish-fulfillment (anxiety dreams, punishment dreams etc), and it is especially in relation to these cases that the falsifiability criterion should apply. Such dreams should be taken as sui generis, as new, autonomous events discovered to be a part of the 'raw material' for a theory of dreaming. The mode of their explanation should not be predetermined by the already established theory of dreams as wish-fulfilment, and it is mere sophistry we are offered in that account of them.

In reply to such an objection, I would maintain that the mode of counter-argument I have just sketched for the simple cases also applies to these apparently disconfirming cases. That dreams are dreamt which arouse fear, anxiety or else give expression to self-criticism and even 'punish' the dreamer, need not and probably should not be seen as referring us directly to wish-fulfillment for their explanation. It is rather that even if we adopt a neutral standpoint regarding do not consider the a priori as instances of wish-fulfilment, we nonetheless seem to be brought back to that hypothesis in order to give any explanation of their nature and existence. That is to say, it is only wish-fulfilment that seems able to provide an adequate and consistent answer to questions about their purpose and about whether they are serving as ends or means.

Let us relate to the anxiety dream as Freud did to his child's dream - i.e. as a clear case of fulfilment of anxiety or fear. But the notion that this suggests - that fears and anxieties are ends in themselves - is a peculiar one. Is it not rather the case that fear and anxiety serve to protect and defend, and the protection and defence they provide only makes sense in terms of preserving some pleasure? Again, it is not clear why the existence of anxiety and punishment dreams cannot be seen as evidence for wanting to hypothesize a theory of wish-fulfilment rather than as evidence for the rejection of such a hypothesis. It is the necessity of explaining their existence that leads to the theory of wish-fulfilment, rather than the theory of wish-fulfilment leading to their explanation.

It is true, I think, that Freud's presentation of these dreams is misleading, and plays into the hands of Popperian critics, because he approaches them from the standpoint of their apparent, but not actual, disconfirmation of the theory of wish-fulfilment. That is to say, he tends to approach them as if it were a matter of accommodating them within wish-fulfilment theory rather than from the standpoint of the inadequacy of alternative attempts to deal with the phenomena they manifest, but I do not think it involves him in an evasion of the real nature of the raw material; in the process of his constant confrontations with 'disconfirming' material he is providing explanations of that material of a kind which do not in an arbitrary and illegitimate way expose the apparently disconfirming as in fact confirming, but reveal the material at issue to be itself evidence for the theory it looks like falsifying. It is not that we can only explain the anxiety dream etc because we have a theory of wish-fulfilment; it is that in order to explain such dreams at all we are led to discover a latent wish. The presumption of the Popperian criticism of this progress is that the object of anything deserving the name of 'scientific' investigation is in some sense already known and pre-constituted. This knowledge - which in effect is a 'knowledge of what kind of knowledge we want - thus determines the appropriateness of certain hypotheses, and decides beforehand what kind of phenomena will be counted as candidates for confirming/disconfirming those hypotheses. It is therefore not allowed that it is the nature of the phenomena submitted to investigation that will determine the appropriateness of a particular methodology, or that the object of a science and the very criteria for selecting phenomena as relevant to its domain, are constituted in the process itself of investigation and theorisation.

2) The Interdependency of the Theory of the Motive and the Theory of the Mechanism

The issue of the autonomy of the theory of wish-fulfilment is particularly raised by the distressing dream. Is the acceptance or rejection of the theory independent of the acceptance or rejection of Freud's theory of dream formation? Freud himself speaks of the 'mutual relation' (8) between the wish which is the dream's motive and the four conditions to which the dream is subject, but he does not explicitly discuss the question of their logical autonomy. The four conditions referred to here are: (i) a necessity for condensation of its psychical material; (ii) a regard for the possibility of its being represented in sensory images; (iii) a demand that the structure of the dream shall be rational and intelligible exterior (though there are dreams which dispense with this demand); and (iv) the necessity of evading the censor. Elsewhere, these are listed as condensation, displacement, considerations of representability, and secondary revision. It is in terms of the latter formulation of the conditions that Freud investigates the mechanism of dream formation (i.e. the 'translation' of dream thoughts into the dream content, in the lengthy chapter on the dream work).

The argument in support of the idea that Freud's analysis of dream-formation is dependent upon the theory of wish-fulfilment, and cannot be theoretically accepted in isolation from the latter, could be elaborated with a great deal of exemplification, consideration of counter-examples, and so on. Since this is only a note, I shall present it very briefly and baldly. My conviction is, and I believe its truth to be demonstrated by Freud (who probably never even considered the possibility of detaching his account of the dream mechanism from the account of its motive), that if we investigate these four conditions we discover that there can be no rationale for their operation except that provided by the theory of wish-fulfilment. This theory, in its modified form, states that the motive of dreams

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S. Freud, SE IV, p533, P IV, p681.
is for the most part a disguised fulfilment of a suppressed wish. Now our 'advocate' of the logical independence of motive and mechanism is one who in principle can reject the theory of wish-fulfilment while accepting the theory of the dream mechanism, that is, to say, the processes of dream production or translation. In theory, then, it can be claimed by such an advocate that a dream is motivated by a fear but that the processes of translation of the fear into the dream content are those of condensation, displacement, etc. In that case, however, either condensation, displacement, etc. would have to be accounted for as defensive against the expression of fear, or else an account of their function would have to be provided other than in terms of their defensive and distorting operation. Both alternatives seem inadequate, but they need to be spelled out.

We must be clear: to accept the theory of the dream mechanism is to accept the latent/manifest distinction. It is to accept the theory of dual psychic agencies in conflict with each other. It is to accept the existence of the system 'Ego' and the impossibility of an undistorted translation of its thought into the manifest dream content. Otherwise, why would there be any call for a mechanism of dream formation at all? Given this, the strongest argument that might be put by someone accepting the theory of dream mechanism but rejecting the theory of dream motivation would be something as follows: a dream is not always motivated by a wish; sometimes it is motivated by, e.g. a fear (or by indifference). In the latter event the dream work submits to the same processes the fear is condensed, displaced, undergoes transformation, uses symbolisation, revises its initial thoughts, etc., and finds expression in the dream content. But expression as what? Perhaps as a palpable wish-fulfilment - i.e. in totally distorted form? So how does such a theory account for distressing dreams, in which the fear is not distorted? There are two possibilities: one could argue, as Freud does in regard to the simple wish-fulfilment dreams, that no disguise is required, so that they represent cases of simple fear fulfilment dreams. Or else it can be argued that distinct dreams are disguised, and hence argued that their motive is not a fear but something else - which it might be claimed was indeed a wish in their specific case. The first argument, however, is not really available to one who advocates the logical independence of motive and mechanism that we are examining since it does not raise the issue of the dream mechanism at all: the supposed palpable fear-fulfilment dreams do not demand any recourse in their explanation to that mechanism since their motivating fear coincides with the fear of the dream content. On the other hand, the second argument fails to explain what it is that is common to the motivating fear that issues in the pleasant dream on the one hand, and the motivating wish that issues in the distressing dream on the other hand. This cannot be done, however, without taking account of the processes underlying the psycho-neuroses and for that reason it has not been carried out in the present work (9). Or again, when dealing with the dream and repression he writes: 'Though my own line of approach to the subject of dreams was determined by my previous work on the psychology of the neuroses, I had not intended to make use of the latter as a basis of reference in the present work. Nevertheless I am constantly being driven to do so, instead of proceeding, as I would have wished, in the contrary direction and using dreams as a means of approach to the psychology of the neuroses.' (10) Similarly he recognizes over and over again his incapacity to deal with anxiety-dreams in terms of dream theory.

But it is not until towards the end of the book that the complexity and specificity of the theory of dreams as wish-fulfillments becomes clear, with Freud's account firstly of the relationship between conscious and unconscious wishes, their antithetical nature, and secondly of the nature of the wish itself. And it is the conjuncture of these two accounts which reveals most profoundly the dependency of the theory of dreaming on the theory of the

3) The Question of Scientificity

I have already suggested the extent to which Freud was aware that the credibility of his theory of dreaming was dependent upon his work in psychoanalysis as a whole. It is no accident that the dreams which cause most trouble from the point of view of wish-fulfilment are those in whose explanation Freud is forced to refer most directly to the theory of the psychoneuroses which he has already developed. The dreams in question cause trouble not so much because they look like disconfirming wish-fulfilment but because the credibility of his explanations relies ultimately on the credibility of the whole of Freudian psychology - in particular of the theory of the aetiology of the neuroses, and in general of the theory of psychic topology and drives.

Thus in the case of the punishment dream, the wish that the dreamer may be punished for a repressed and forbidden wishful impulse is claimed to derive from the 'ego'. Freud's comment on this is that the mechanism of dream formation would in general be greatly clarified if instead of the opposition between 'conscious' and 'unconscious' we were to speak of that between 'ego' and 'repressed'. This cannot be done, however, without taking account of the processes underlying the psychoneuroses and for that reason it has not been carried out in the present work (9). Or again, when dealing with the dream and repression he writes: 'Though my own line of approach to the subject of dreams was determined by my previous work on the psychology of the neuroses, I had not intended to make use of the latter as a basis of reference in the present work. Nevertheless I am constantly being driven to do so, instead of proceeding, as I would have wished, in the contrary direction and using dreams as a means of approach to the psychology of the neuroses.' (10) Similarly he recognizes over and over again his incapacity to deal with anxiety-dreams in terms of dream theory.

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9 S. Freud, SE IV, p588; P IV, p716.
10 S. Freud, SE IV, p688; P IV, p740.
Unconscious and on the metapsychology of pleasure principle/reality principle. At this point, it becomes clear that what counts from the point of view of the 'scientific' status of the theory of dreams is not the account he gives (or manipulation he wreaks, as his critics might put it) of the apparently disconfirming evidence, but the scientificity of the Freudian account of the human psyche generally. For his account and interpretation of dreams is entirely plausible and totally without strain when set in this context, and when viewed from the standpoint of his theory of the psychical apparatus and its working, the distressing dreams present themselves as autonomously and immediately confirmatory evidence for his hypotheses about the psyche — evidence which is drawn from a specific manifestation of psychic activity, namely dreaming. Freud is not hypothesising from the nature of dreams to the nature of the psyche, nor from some pre-established and rigid set of ideas about the nature of the psyche to the nature of dreaming. Rather, he is building a psychology based on an honest confrontation with all the phenomena presented by psychic life (and it is surely to his credit, and should recommend him to the Popperians; that he does not merely confront the abnormal and exceptional, but poses himself the question of the normal psychic activity of dreaming). Now the object of any scientific theory can be said to be the adequate explanation in as self-consistent form as possible of the mass of objective facts that fall within its province. The problem here, of course, is what counts as the 'province of the study', i.e. the problem of the criteria for including or excluding data as relevant. It is the problem of selectivity (and such problems always refer us back to further ones regarding the conceptual orderings which we bring to the 'chaotic aggregate' of the universe). It is right, I believe, to raise these problems of ordering and of the selectivity of data based on them (in the way that, for example, Levi-Strauss and Foucault do). And it is right to do so not because it provides the titillating frisson of intellectual shock (to whose embarrassment and/or seduction the Western analytic mind is pretty resistant anyway) or because it provides the opportunity for indulging in an entertaining foray into relativist thinking a la Feyerabend, but because it allows us to break down prejudices about what is knowledge and what is not; and it is only via a constant questioning in regard to this that new and crucial areas of study are opened up and new knowledge thereby gained. It is not clear what is meant, therefore, by charging Freud with being 'arbitrary' in his selection of data and mode of dealing with it. Arbitrary relative to what? It is not as if there were an already constituted object of psychoanalysis to which Freud applied a certain set of conceptions and wielded them in a certain kind of way; the object of psychoanalysis is constituted in the process of selecting and attempting to explain certain phenomena encountered in human experience (dreams, the symptomatologies of mental illness, the recovery from these etc.).

But the claim that Freud's work is unscientific is based on the notion that we already know what can count as the object for a science — that our selection has already been made in this respect. If the set of phenomena that Freud attempted to explain are not susceptible to appropriation by methodologies regarded as scientific, then they cannot constitute the object of scientific work. Popper makes this very clear when he cedes that Freud may well be partially correct — he could cede he is wholly correct — in what he discovers about the human psyche. Nevertheless, these truths are not scientific — they are what he calls 'revealed science'. But Popper's criterion for demarcating between such 'revealed' science and science proper is its public quality — the fact that it is made accessible to what he calls free criticism (i.e. its being presented in a way that allows it to be challenged, refuted, denied, etc. through the discourse and experience of other scientists). What is not clear is why Freud's theory fails in this respect. After all his work was made public in the way required and Freud himself was highly sensitized to criticism and very prepared to review his theories in the light of it. The problem seems rather to be that the criticism was lacking — Freud himself repeatedly bemoans the fact that his theory never gets so much as a mention (see the Prefaces to The Interpretation of Dreams).

Now this position has to some extent been rectified in recent years by various experimental and theoretical investigations of Freud's theory (11). If Popper would allow — as it seems he must — that that kind of criticism and testing of Freudian theory constitutes the 'genuine' type of criticism to which he seems to be referring when, for example, he cites the deficiency of a Robinson Crusoe's astronomical observations (there would be no means of Crusoe discovering his 'personal equation' of the characteristic personal reaction time affecting his observations), then what would he acknowledge to be its implications for the scientificity of Freud's work? It would at least appear that Popper's a priori dismissal of Freudian theory as non-scientific would have to be reconsidered in the light of his own criteria as to what constitutes a science. Either the strict Popperian must recognize the implications of public criticism of Freud's work, or else we must suspect a prejudicial stance towards it in the first place — a quite deliberate and irrational refusal to confront the kind of evidence that might grant it the seal of scientificity.

11 See works referred to in footnotes (1) and (3).