

# Dream thoughts

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In the German vernacular it is said that “dreams are foam” (“Träume sind Schäume”). They are bubbles that rise from the depth of the unconscious and, reaching the surface of consciousness, they burst or they remain for some time until they pass away. This is the reason why it is difficult in the beginning for a person who is interested in dreams to “catch” a dream and to make it available for the day-time consciousness. In the beginning there are only dream snippets and single pictures that remain in the consciousness but, after some time and training, whole stories and details like color, form, smell and also emotions and mood can be remembered. The dream becomes more vivid and three-dimensional and the dreamer begins to realize that he had experiences in the dream world that are as realistic and detailed as in the waking world. It may be a dreamed world, which is a psychological world, but with regard to experience it is as real as the other. With some training and skill the dreamer may even be able to dive consciously into the dream world. He will recognize there with great astonishment and delight that he lives in a second world in which he sees, feels, and tastes just like in the waking world. Then he is no longer dependent on second hand experience, drawn from his memory, which does not convey the full reality of the experience but only a pale imitation.

Therefore dreams are an experience in a psychological but real world which in hindsight looks pale and unreal by comparison because one does not consciously direct ones attention and interest towards this rich world of experience. There are, however, intermediate stages of dream experience where the sensory experiences are not as vivid and are hard to recognize. On the other side thoughts and conversations with dream figures step in the foreground. They may become so dominant that the dream consists only of thoughts and dialogs. This mode of dreaming I call “dream thoughts”. I know this kind of dream mainly from the early morning hours where sleep becomes shallow. The dream may begin as a full fledged sensual experience but after some time, waking up slowly, I begin to reflect on the dream events. It may be happening entirely that I come to realize my being in a dream but I would not label this kind of dream experience as a lucid dream because my consciousness, which is becoming clearer, is not fully in the dream anymore but experiences the dream events from a somewhat half detached position. This may be compared with reading a book where the reader is not fully immersed in the story but is still aware of holding a book in his hands and turning a page from time to time. The interesting point is that these dream thoughts nevertheless continue independently to unfold the dream story while I observe its course passively.

But I am not completely passive. Sometimes I have reflective thoughts or a question in my relatively quiet mind which influences the course of the story, too. This may continue for several minutes till the dream events become less and less sensory and staler. The dream story is running towards its end. Sometimes it begins to repeat like an old vinyl record with a scratch. Then I have to intervene abruptly with a clear intent and a brisk physical movement of my body. On other occasions the content of these dream thoughts becomes thinner and thinner till the source of this rivulet runs dry and I realize that I am completely awake.

In order to illustrate that I would like to add an example: *After I just drove on my boat with two male acquaintances through a canal, I walked together with the same persons through a very narrow lane of an old town with houses that were at least five stories high. The old town reminded me of the old port town of Genoa in Italy. Shortly before we had passed a somewhat delicate river bend with the boat in which the current pulled us towards the outer bank of the river. But now one of the other men, who knew the place well, guides us through this narrow and rather somber lane. But passage was denied if one did not play boccia. So we were forced to pick up a heavy and rather big stone ball and to throw it toward a smaller one which lay there. But we had to roll the heavy ball along and on the edge of the sidewalk without falling down, which was quite a feat.*

*Finally we passed through but in the next lane it was even darker. One could hardly see one's hands before the eyes, causing us to lose our way, and we thus ended up nearly completely blind in a little dark store -- a shoe store as it turned out. An old little man offered us shoes, but they did not really fit. He had a meager selection. We succeeded in finding a pair for one of my fellows, but as the old man wrapped up the shoes, a big, fat black spider crawled out of the shoe box. We were disgusted. Also it smelled rather musty in this shop and it was so dark that one could hardly see anything, never mind the purchased shoes. The shop proprietor went to the back room because the telephone rang. We mused how this shop could function and decided to use the opportunity to leave the musty and run down place. On leaving the store I heard how someone phoned, who ordered a pair of brown shoes with green caps. Therefore the business must still be somewhat good. As we were again on the dark lane I looked back to remember the place where the shop was. But that had suddenly disappeared. I was rather amazed; that could not be true. I knew this phenomenon from other dreams where things and persons disappear as soon as my attention is distracted from them. Therefore I intended to return the following day to investigate the matter.*

*As I visited the same little lane the following day, I could not find the shop, it remained literally gone. I was baffled. I asked the residents in the lane about the store. They laughed and remarked that the shop existed and opened only a few times over a span of several weeks. It would exist behind that small green closed shutter and therefore could not be recognized. Indeed there was only a shutter without any sign or shield.*

*So I went there later when the shop was open. I asked the skinny old man if business was doing well. He explained that he really was a shoe maker not a shoe seller. He would fulfill only orders. The only shoes he had left were those which were not to the satisfaction of his clients because they*

*did not fit well enough and he had to make a new pair. Sometimes passers-by would buy such left over shoes but it was obvious that not many passers-by would stray into his shop, as old and as musty as the rooms were. Obviously, several days before we would have left the shop, too, because of the fat spider that crawled out of the box. Actually he should have given up the shop a long time ago because he had earned enough money but he was so attached to his store and had nothing else to do. For a renovation he would be too old but if the building would be torn down, he would give up the shop.*

The dream begins with a scene change which is as smooth and at the same time as abrupt that the dreaming-ego does not recognize it at all. This is typical for a dream. In dream thoughts this would not happen. Sensory data like the darkness of the lanes and the heaviness of the stone ball were experienced impressively. Also, in the second section, the dream experience is still sensory but the first reflective thoughts enter the scene: How is it possible that such a ruined shop could function? Also that I leave the store and look back to remember the place, only to realize that the shop had disappeared. In that moment I remembered that often in my dreams people, things and scenes disappear when I do not focus my attention on them and had directed it to something else. My expectation is fulfilled, because of that, and the shop had evaporated. Now, a jump in time follows where I visit that place again. But now nearly no sensory data is left, the visual impressions are weak, and the dialog with the residents dominates. Another jump in time occurs. Now I find the shop keeper and he explains the facts. These two sections are dominated by dialogs and their main purpose is to clarify the situation and to answer open questions from the original dream. That dream was an imperfect gestalt which had to be completed by the slowly awaking critical consciousness. This imperfect gestalt was filled with rational explanations. As soon as there was a satisfactory solution, the dream thoughts ended. It should be mentioned here that the original dream ended when I and my companions left the shop and I looked back. The jumps in time were of another nature than the shift of dream scenes in the beginning. They were inserted for rational reasons to keep the story smooth and believable. First the explanation of the closed shutters, which caused me to oversee the shop, and second, the presence of the proprietor who could answer the open questions since, after the first jump, the store was still closed. I cannot find a rational explanation for the shift of scenes at the beginning except an associative merging of similar elements: the narrow canal and the narrow lane. The same two companions and the same action of being on the way were also elements that bridged the two scenes.

In the course of over 25 years I noted many dreams which end or die away in the form of lengthy dream thoughts. As mentioned above, this usually occurs in the early morning. The waking up is easier and more flowing. If I wake up after a dream in the middle of the night, the change from dreaming to waking is more abrupt. Then my consciousness is more cloudy and groggy. I need more willpower and effort to collect my thoughts and to remember to write down the dream..

These dream thoughts are a very common phenomenon in my dream life and it surprises me all the more that, in the course of my study of psychology and dream literature, I did not come across a description of this kind of dream production which emerges from a mixture of dreaming and waking consciousness. Only Freud did research in that direction with his considerations about the primary and secondary processes of thinking. I suspect that this phenomenon is widely spread but overseen, because it is natural and because the dreamer's attention is mainly focused on the dream action.

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