DREAMING

Anthropological and Psychological Interpretations

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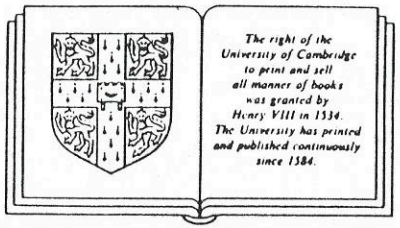
A SCHOOL OF AMERICAN RESEARCH BOOK



CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS
Cambridge
New York · New Rochelle · Melbourne · Sydney

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On classifying dreams[1]

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> Your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams.[2]
>
> ACTS 2:17

The quoted lines from the New Testament call attention to the important differences between dreams and visions as linguistic, perceptual, and cognitive categories. Furthermore, they remind us that in many societies dream classification has a great deal to do with social hierarchy and status. It is a fact eminently worthy of investigation that whereas it is commonly believed that thought systems have evolved from simple to complex, according to some sort of progression toward increasing complexity, dream classification apparently is most elaborate in cultures other than those associated with the modern Western rationalist tradition.

It is a fair question to ask what the absence of an elaborate system of dream classification in our own tradition might mean when compared with the presence of elaborate systems in the ancient Near East, in ancient Greece, and in modern Morocco. Can the absence of such a classificatory schema imply that classification is in all cultures subordinated to human concerns about areas of experience perceived to be of importance?[3]

In this chapter I will argue that classificatory systems and principles of dream interpretation can provide a wealth of material concerning not only rational, explanatory, and logical thought processes but also material revealing unconscious emotions, wishes, and irrational forces. Moreover, the attention required to establish and maintain an elaborate classificatory system of dream interpretation may be analyzed in terms of the principle of the investment of psychological resources. When it is assumed that the amount of psychic energy is limited, then where and how this energy is generated, how ideas and feelings become elements of a system, and how these systems of individuals are regulated through interactions all become pertinent questions for the elucidation of systems of dream classification.

In the pages that follow I will examine three systems of dream classification and the relations each bears to its cultural context. I will also demonstrate how an analysis of these systems can be carried out, and suggest some implications for the understanding and exploration of all classificatory systems, both scientific and religious. The three systems of dream classification to be analyzed are those of (1) ancient Mesopotamia; (2) second-century Greece, as represented by Artemidorus' famous dream book, the *Oneirocritica*; and (3) modern Morocco, where I did my fieldwork.

This selection presents several advantages. First, the Mesopotamian tradition studied by A. Leo Oppenheim influenced our biblical sources on dreams, as well as the tradition on which Artemidorus drew. Furthermore, the dream book of Artemidorus, translated into Arabic, has influenced dream interpretation right up to the present day in Morocco. Therefore, I will be analyzing three traditions related not only to one another but also to our own. Second, the sources used in each case are significantly and, I trust, instructively different. What we know of dream classification in ancient Mesopotamia has come to us in the form of cuneiform tablets written by scribes for purposes both political and religious. These purposes of course affect the choice of materials which were noted. In the second case, the dream book of Artemidorus, the author is a Lydian writing in the early Christian world dominated by Rome. Since he dedicates the book to his son in order to pass on the principles and tricks of his trade, dream interpretation is perceived as a profession, a craft that can be taught and learnt, and upon which a son can be expected to survive. Finally, in the case of the Moroccan materials, while I can say I had the advantage of being able to question

living people, I cannot claim that my materials are influenced any less by my own preoccupations, my own motivated ignorance as a European fieldworker in a non-European society, or my own limitations. I trust, nonetheless, that my attempts to elucidate these inevitable obstacles will provide the interested reader with some insight into the nature, purpose, and function of the organization and presentation of Moroccan materials (see Kilborne 1978, 1981).

In short, we will be examining three different kinds of sources about three different cultural traditions of dream interpretation. In each case I will argue that dream classificatory principles indicate something about cultural values and individual experience, that the nature and purpose of the writers who provide us with sources suggest paths of exploration, that each case can usefully be seen in the light of the other two, and finally that all three cases bear some relation to our American and European ideas today about dreams and dream classification. They can therefore be profitably and intelligibly compared precisely because there is a framework within which all are relevant to our concerns and ideas.

DREAM CLASSIFICATION

Only certain types of classificatory systems have been studied, a fact that surely has much to do with vogues for particular subjects and the desire that anthropological research be consonant with American and European values. The frame of reference according to which classificatory systems are isolated for specialized study is seldom examined. Likewise, the theory of classificatory principles is neither consistent nor very well explored. For one thing, to study such a frame of reference touches upon the limits of classification as an analytic method and upon the problem of belief; for another, it raises the specter of controversies over 'primitive thought,' both issues which many social scientists find it more comfortable to ignore.

Dream classifications as collective representations are, generally speaking, conspicuously absent from our Western tradition. Of course, there are dream theories, but it seems fair to say that we do not invest as much culturally and psychologically in dreams as, for example, Mediterranean peoples do, or as did the ancient Greeks, Assyrians, or Egyptians. To some extent, then, the very existence of an elaborate classificatory system of dreams is a manifestation of the importance accorded to dreams. For us, dreams are either objects of superstition

(another manifestation of our European problem with belief) or an individual experience (as in psychotherapy or psychoanalysis). For the same individual to compare and classify his dreams is rare in the West; for him to compare his dreams with those of his neighbor by means of a classificatory system is rarer still.

Elaborate systems of dream classification are inseparably bound up with cultural belief systems and are essentially related to religion (Kilborne 1985). Thus, dream classification is one of those instances of a classificatory system rooted in belief systems. Its existence and persistence testify to the meanings and perceived importance attached to dreams by social actors.

DREAM FUNCTIONS AND CULTURAL USES OF CLASSIFICATION

Psychoanalysts have contributed to the following lines of investigation concerning theories of dream functions: (1) dreams are a point of departure for secondary associations and the technique of free association; (2) they are a way of dealing with conflict; (3) they are an element in the design of a case history; (4) they are an expression of unconscious desires and defense mechanisms; and finally (5) they are an expression of varying capacities for ego synthesis and reality testing during the course of therapy (see, for example, French and Fromm 1964; Natterson 1981; Bonime 1962).

A functional analysis of dreams in psychoanalytic writings, however, does not touch upon the important matter of dream classification, upon questions of collective representations and cultural values. Furthermore, whereas one can describe a butterfly and assign it to a particular genus and species, the same cannot be done for a dream. Thus, dream classification is significantly different from classification in the natural sciences. Although dream classification does not have the 'scientific' functions of, for example, the classification of mollusks, where observation and classification go hand in hand, it does have social functions. Closer to linguistic models and classification in language (thought categories), dream classification necessarily deals with psychodynamic processes.

The important question in dream classification concerns the perception of the dream and the way in which, for specific individual and social reasons, it becomes associated with certain kinds of experiences;

with its role in the formulation of thinking and social consciousness. Dreams and dream interpretation have, broadly speaking, at least seven functions: (1) divinatory, (2) political, (3) religious, (4) artistic or formal, (5) therapeutic, (6) psychodynamic, and (7) expressive. Naturally, these functions overlap and interlock in most societies in which dreams are believed to be important.

DREAMS AND DIVINATION IN ANCIENT MESOPOTAMIA

According to A. Leo Oppenheim (1966:341), divination was the subject of greater and more sustained interest in ancient Mesopotamia than in any other civilization. To analyze the dream in ancient Mesopotamia, Oppenheim holds, it is necessary to examine dreams in divination and science. 'I propose to see in the divination aspect of the dream a "scientific" attitude, while I consider as falling under the heading of folklore the aspect that derives no predictions from dreams but accepts them as psychological phenomena' (ibid.:342). Then to emphasize his position he continues, 'I am prepared to say that predictions derived from such dream contents as, for example, seeing certain animals, eating certain foods, and so forth, are based on a "scientific" attitude of the Mesopotamian interpreters, whereas dreams that the modern psychologist could characterize as nightmares, or as typically symbol-affected dreams, belong in Mesopotamia to an "unscientific" view of the world; they are vestiges of dream explanations on a folklore level' (ibid.).

Whether or not one agrees with Oppenheim's opposition between scientific and folkloric attitudes, the distinction does indicate a fundamental proposition that theories of dreams imply ideas about thinking and culturally significant conceptions of evidence and knowledge. If this proposition is accepted, then it becomes possible and worthwhile to examine the cultural, religious, folkloristic, scientific, economic, and political as well as the psychological (in this instance, the 'individual,' i.e., psychodynamic and cognitive) functions of dream theories. However, any assessment of the cultural and psychological functions of dream theories depends not only on the analytic theories available but also on the character of the evidence.

The first feature of ancient Mesopotamian dream theories to consider is that all we know about them is filtered through written documents and other materials, since the culture is today inaccessible to observation. If

there were aspects of dream interpretation which were not written down, we cannot know them except perhaps by inference. Thus, the first difficulty lies in gaining some idea of the full context of dream theories; the second lies in understanding what we *do* have access to.

Mesopotamian divination practices were recorded in highly formalized one-sentence units known as 'omens.' There are large numbers of these omens available to scholars. Because of their emphasis on observation and systematic analysis, Oppenheim (ibid.:343) holds that 'these omen texts reflect a consistently rational approach which is hardly paralleled in Mesopotamian literature.'

It would appear, then, that in ancient Mesopotamia, not only was there a considerable body of knowledge about divinatory dreams but, equally significant, this body of knowledge reflects careful observation and is treated systematically. Moreover, those social and political forces in ancient Mesopotamia which gave dreams a prominent role in divination may be expected to be reflected in these omens. And, as Oppenheim demonstrates, indeed they are. Finally, the classificatory approach to dreams and divination in ancient Mesopotamia itself would appear to be rooted in social attitudes towards the dream. The appearance of dream classification is itself a social fact worth considering rather carefully.

In Oppenheim's analysis the 'message dream' is clearly not associated with the systematic, analytic, observational approach. Such dreams are reported in a stylized fashion and use as their hallmark narrative conventions which he calls 'the dream frame.' Typically the dreamer is a king, a hero, or a priest. In the dream a deity appears to this dreamer and conveys a message. No sooner is this done than the dreamer awakens suddenly. Interestingly, such dreams are generally not interpreted.

So far, then, we have one major official class of dreams dreamt by socially, politically, and/or religiously important individuals: message dreams in which the deity communicates with the dreamer, and the dreamer then appears as spokesman for divine beings communicating 'their' message to the people. If message dreams are not interpreted, one can infer that this is because of the prominent position of the dreamer and the less prominent position of the interpreter. For, as Oppenheim (ibid.:347) remarks, only message dreams are recognized by the ancient Mesopotamians to be theologically acceptable. If the dreamer/king is

graced with a divine communication, then how can a lesser man tell those around him what the god really meant?

Oppenheim identifies a second category of dreams, 'symbolic' dreams. Like message dreams, these conform to strict conventions and are subjected to minimal interpretation. Examples of symbolic dreams are Joseph's two dreams which foretell of his own supremacy over his brothers (Gen. 37:5–9). The sheaves, sun, moon, and stars made obeisance before a single sheaf, which Joseph interpreted as symbolizing himself. Joseph's interpretation of Pharaoh's dream (Gen. 41:25–36) is another example of a symbolic dream dreamed by a king and interpreted by a religious man in touch with the deity.

But we are here faced with trying to assess the cultural meanings attributed to stereotyped categories and dreams. Interpretable religious messenger and symbolic dreams are stereotyped to the extent to which: (a) dreamers are predictably important persons and (b) dreams (as reported in the literature) conform to explicit literary conventions. But not only religious dreams are stereotyped. Interpreted dreams and interpretation itself may also be relegated to the profane (i.e., rational and 'scientific') realm of the political and social spheres. And categories of interpreters would appear to reflect this division. On the one side we have the 'inspired interpreter-artist, the wise man,' and on the other, the 'diviner-scientist' (ibid.:349). Each class of interpreters as it were takes its cut of the dreams which can be interpreted. And criteria for interpretability would seem to depend upon conventional definitions of dream perception.

In Oppenheim's analysis, symbolic dreams are distinctly less official (and therefore less religious?) than messenger dreams. For there is a significant difference in the way in which the two are reported. 'In the Bible, "symbolic" dreams are reported solely by gentiles – the Pharaoh of the Exodus and Nebuchadnezzar – for whom the Lord very conveniently provides the services of Joseph and Daniel – who are his pious interpreters. In the cuneiform literature, Sumerian and Akkadian alike, "symbolic" dreams occur only in mythological texts and are interpreted there by gods and heroes' (ibid.). If I understand this passage correctly, Oppenheim says that messenger dreams are in effect direct communications from the deity, not texts in need of exegesis; and the more in need of exegesis is the dream, the less inspirational and/or the less powerful the dreamer.

A third major category of dreams can be called 'realist' or 'physicalist.' These dreams, capable of being linked to physical causes, are believed not to warrant interpretation precisely because they come from the body. Examples of such dreams include themes with hunger, sexual intercourse, and pain. Such 'physicalist dreams' are perceived to be what they seem, extensions of waking perceptions which do not call for 'interpretations.' The 'absent' symbolic (i.e., negative social) value attached to such dreams is, of course, meaningful. But their meaning is left to individual dreamers to determine. Such meanings are perceptually unintelligible to interpreters, precisely because they are not defined to be socially symbolic. In other words, they are not collective representations in the Durkheimian sense. Because certain dreams can be meaningful only to their dreamers, they are 'transparent' and therefore invisible to interpreters. Because these are dreams perceived to be what they appear, there is no stereotype to which the physicalist dream can be compared in interpretation.

Logically, we would expect that the dreams on which interpretation would concentrate would be those which are neither so stereotypical that there is little room for interpretation nor those which are physicalist and therefore idiosyncratic, in which case the interpretive art of comparison has no play.

The kinds of dreams on which interpretation concentrates are likely to be dreams which are clearly neither 'religious' nor 'secular,' but rather which deal with the ambiguities of common experience. According to Oppenheim, what seems to make a dream a 'message dream' has to do more with the person who has it than with either any absolute standards by which dream content can be judged or criteria for putting it in a particular category. What makes a dream an ordinary dream attributed to body functions and not credited with any divinatory value is the dreamer's feelings that the dream is not important, or that it represents no communication, rather than any specific content or theme associated with the class of ordinary dreams. Their cause tends to be sought in the body.

In the light of the Mesopotamian materials, we can suggest several propositions about dream classification and interpretation that need to be explored cross-culturally. First, the apparatus of cultural systems of dream interpretation will not be brought to bear on *all* dreams. Dreams at both ends of the spectrum, whether spiritual – royal, messenger-type dreams – or physical – grumbling-stomach dreams – will be set apart as

too important and too unimportant respectively. The fact that neither type of dream was interpreted in ancient Mesopotamia indicates that perception of the significance or insignificance of dreams is, to a large extent, dependent upon cultural conceptions of dreaming rather than upon any objective taxonomy of the entity one might call 'the dream.' Otherwise why would some dreams rather than others be exempt from interpretation?

Second, the belief that dreams are objects of a science of divination is as significant in determining the perception of the dream as the belief that some dreams are important because their dreamers are important. Moreover, beliefs about classes of dreams and beliefs in true dreams in no way preclude what Oppenheim calls a 'scientific' or 'rationalist' approach towards dream classification. Thus, supernatural beliefs, classificatory principles, and political benefits may all be considered an integral part of conception of dreams in the minds of the ancient Mesopotamians.

Third, there is a relationship between the spectrum of dream categories and the cultural theories of the self and of thinking. This, of course, raises the issue of what sort of role dream classification plays in folk dream-theories, as well as how and to what extent interpreters actually follow either the classifications or the dream books available to them. In the case of the Babylonian and Assyrian dream books, we can only guess what the ancient Mesopotamian experience and perception of dreams were like. For, as we have seen, a number of cultural and individual elements determined what sort of dreams were written down, and we can only go by recorded materials. Nonetheless, if one wishes to understand more about ancient Near Eastern notions of self and personhood it is highly instructive to study ancient Near Eastern dream theories. And, as Oppenheim well shows, a careful examination of dream books reveals a great deal about belief systems in the ancient Near East.

DREAM INTERPRETATION IN SECOND-CENTURY GREECE: ARTEMIDORUS

The popular tradition of dream classification and interpretation which persists in the Islamic world and in the Mediterranean[4] has its roots in one extremely important work: the *Oneirocritica (Interpretation of Dreams)* of the second-century Greek, Artemidorus. Between the

messenger (supernatural) dreams and the grumbling-stomach (natural) dreams, both relegated to the general category of dreams which for different reasons are not interpreted, we find the richest tradition of dream classification. Moreover – and this is the point to be emphasized – this tradition of dream divination and classification is linked to popular lore and to the attempt to find meaningful patterns in the here-and-now of daily experience. To scrutinize dreams for Artemidorus and those who follow him is to look into the commonality of daily experience, to probe the human mind, rather than to attest to the existence of a divine spirit. It is to provide the appearances of dreams with mundane, psychological meanings in order to enable dreamers to deal better with daily existence.

Artemidorus lived in the second century A.D., the century of the emperors Hadrian and Marcus Aurelius, the orator Aelius Aristides, the writer Pausanias, and the scientists Ptolemy and Galen. Widely traveled himself, Artemidorus was a keen observer, a quality which stood him in good stead as the most brilliant exponent of a long oneirocritic tradition which was to influence European thought and literature and with which Freud was to become familiar seventeen centuries later.

The *Oneirocritica*, composed of five books organized in a systematic fashion, displays a 'rational, practical approach' (White 1975:7). It is helpful to dwell on the organization and classification of the first two books to understand better what kind of 'scientific' approach White and others have perceived in the *Oneirocritica*, to compare these books with the description of categories found in ancient Mesopotamia, and to assess the importance of Artemidorus' work for the Mediterranean tradition of dream interpretation and temple sleeping still very much alive today.

The first book concerns the self and the body and is to be contrasted with the second, which deals with the natural world. In Book I mention is made of internal as opposed to external relationships and of the relation between dream and dreamer which the interpreter needs to know (ibid.:20). Whole dreams are discussed, and what is meant by 'whole' in this context is highly suggestive. From these the sequence of subjects roughly includes birth (of oneself), pregnancy, and children, the coming into being of the notion of self, and then a series of subjects focussing on the head (ibid.:13–17). This is particularly significant because, as Onians writes, 'in Greek popular belief the head is an organ of life, a seat of the psyche, an organ of generation, and a symbol of the

continuity of life and family' (1954:93). We still speak of the 'head' of state and the 'head' of the household. Onians mentions the Greek idea according to which the doctor acts as a brain to the patient. That such an idea gained acceptance implies the considerable extent to which suggestion and authority must have been used in healing. Finally, there is the analogy of the philosopher to the brain; the philosopher-king acts as a brain to his people.

The sequence of themes dealing with the head in the *Oneirocritica* includes hair, forehead, ears, eyebrows, vision, nose, cheeks, jaws, beards, teeth, tongue, vomiting, abscesses in head region, beheaded, back headedness, animal-headed, head in hands, and horns on head (White 1975:26–36). Two features of this sequence are worth noting: the fact that the various themes begin with the hair on the head (i.e., at the top) and then proceed downwards more or less straightforwardly until one comes to vomiting. From there on all themes deal with illness or abnormality. Significantly, one finds two categories of features, the first normal and healthy, the second abnormal and associated with illness. This sequence implies culturally grounded perceptions and conceptions of the self, the body and body parts, together with their relations to political and social organization on the one hand and to physiology and medicine on the other.

The systematic fashion in which Artemidorus organizes his considerable volume of material and the ways in which he also uses the older popular tradition of auspicious and inauspicious meanings of certain dream symbols are among the most fascinating features of the *Oneirocritica*. Moreover, in the light of the distinction mentioned above between scientific and status-oriented interpretations of dreams, Artemidorus' approach is of particular interest. No longer is there that emphasis on position and hierarchy, whether political or social, which characterized dream interpretation in the ancient Near East. Rather, much depends upon context and the systematic consideration of the field of dream interpretation generally. To Artemidorus, symbols are a language of their own, to be decoded through the method of dream interpretation. In contrast to methods of dream interpretation in ancient Mesopotamia, the scientific (i.e., systematic and classificatory) method of dream interpretation used by Artemidorus has egalitarian overtones: Dreams are phenomena to be explained with reference to the everyday life of the folk rather than with reference to symbols of social, political, and/or religious status.

For instance, consider the discussion of food in Book I. Dry and wet (rather than the Lévi-Straussian raw and cooked) are principles according to which nourishment is divided into two basic categories. Artemidorus first discusses drinks. Drinking cold water is good luck for all, but drinking warm water brings bad luck except to those used to it (it is an unnatural practice); drinking moderate amounts of wine is auspicious but drinking mead, honeyed quince wine, hydromel, myrtle wine, and prepared wines means bad luck to all but the rich, to whom it is natural to drink them (ibid.:50). Drinking vinegar presages a quarrel with a member of the household 'because of the contraction of the mouth' (ibid.), while drinking olive oil means poisoning or illness. 'It is always auspicious for a thirsty man to drink . . . for thirst is nothing but a longing for something, and drinking releases a person from that craving' (ibid.).

After a brief discussion of drinking cups Artemidorus passes to dry nourishment beginning with vegetables, specifically 'vegetables that give off a smell after they are eaten as, for example, radishes, endive, and cut leeks indicate that secrets will be revealed and signal hatred for one's associates' (ibid.:51). Also, 'beets, mallow, dock, curled dock, and orach are only auspicious for debtors, since they stimulate the stomach and relax the bowels' (ibid.). Any reader here is a bit perplexed. And, as is often the case reading Artemidorus, the explanation which follows is more suggestive than helpful. 'For the stomach and entrails especially are like a money-lender' (ibid.). Presumably this is because money 'passes through' them. Plants with a head (carrots, etc.) are good luck and signify success. This seems in keeping with the importance attributed by the Greek and Roman world of Artemidorus to the head. But dreams about cabbage are 'entirely inauspicious' since 'the cabbage is the only vegetable around which the vine does not curl' (ibid.), yet another empirical observation incorporated into the 'science' of dream interpretation. After an elaborate discussion of cereals and breads Artemidorus notes that 'it is good for a man to dream that he is eating the kind of bread to which he is accustomed. For to a poor man, black bread is appropriate and to a rich man, white bread' (ibid.:52). He goes on to discuss meats and fish, then concludes the section on edibles with fruit, having followed in his presentation the order of courses. The transition to the following section is made with the phrase: 'Since household articles naturally [*sic*] come next after food, I think that it is fitting to deal with them also' (ibid.:54–5).

I have dwelt on Artemidorus in some detail here in order to

demonstrate the kind of careful observation of the real world that characterizes his *Oneirocritica*. Significantly, the order of presentation often reflects not so much immutable natural sequences, as with the seasons, but rather customary social procedures. For instance, he begins his discussion of food not with apples (because A is the first letter of the alphabet) or with milk (because that is what newborn infants eat first), but rather with vegetables. The sequence is: (1) vegetables, (2) meat and fish, and (3) fruit, the common order of courses in an ordinary meal.

In other words, Artemidorus bases his classificatory principles on the organization of human behaviors he sees around him. There is no preoccupation with Platonic forms or ideal order. His is a mundane (profane) system of dream interpretation rooted in the customs, habits, and psychological motivations and symbolic meanings which he has observed at first hand, collected and compiled in 'meaningful' systems. The systematics of Artemidorus' approach may seem to us oddly incompatible with the 'superstitious' meanings of the symbols. But this incompatibility should not blind us to the richness of his classificatory system, or to the many ways in which his book can profitably be studied by all those interested in cultural systems of dream interpretation. Our very difficulties in confidently tagging the work of Artemidorus as either scientific or religious, profane or sacred, point up its significance.

Finally, Artemidorus' discussion of dream symbolism effectively calls attention to what has been referred to as the multivalence of symbols or what Freud (1900) called 'overdetermination,' one symbol having a variety of complementary meanings. In Artemidorus the same symbols have different meanings for different people (e.g., dreams of white and black bread for rich and poor dreamers). In working out the interpretive principles of comparative dream interpretation, Artemidorus articulates a symbolic language which retains many of the characteristics of linguistic systems. In fact, dream interpretation for Artemidorus is a discourse on the language of dreams; rather than distancing the dreamer and interpreter from the here-and-now, dream interpretation brings them closer. The principles of interpretation are to be discovered not in any divine messages or exegesis of texts, but in the world of daily experience. Thus by calling attention to the depth and richness of everyday existence, by applying the methods of observation to the behaviors of those around him, Artemidorus can be seen as having developed what Freud is now known for: a method of relating dreams to the various hidden meanings of social and individual life.

It is worth emphasizing that the prosaic, concrete system of

Artemidorus in which meanings vary depending upon the dreamer and the dream situation is quite unlike the more idealized system of dream interpretation which Islam and other religions appear to encourage. Other-worldly truths are less relative than those with which our daily lives confront us. The very relativity of the meanings of dream symbols in Artemidorus lends itself to systematizing them as a language, to contextualizing them. And the context in turn then needs describing and understanding. Hence the importance of social context, social status, sex, age, and all the variables which enter into the interpretation of a dream for Artemidorus. In short, dreams serve as a prism which concentrates and encodes the hidden meanings of daily experience; they depend upon interpretation to decode them and make them intelligible.

Because Artemidorus addresses many kinds of dreamers and consequently takes into account a far more variegated, realistic social spectrum than do the message dreams of the ancient Near East and of ancient Greece, one can argue that his system of dream interpretation reflects a more complex and diverse society than do the dream books studied by Oppenheim. Indeed, there is certainly much evidence to substantiate such a claim. Artemidorus' mundane search behind dream symbols for meanings in daily experience may be opposed to the more ethereal thrust of rationalist religious theology, particularly Christian theological dogma. The influence of the dream book of Artemidorus was profound throughout the Mediterranean primarily because it articulated cultural notions of and attitudes towards the dream and dream interpretation. The Christian tradition discredited dreams, relegated them to a secondary place, and treated them with suspicion. By contrast, within Islam the situation was rather different. Whereas Christ gained a reputation as a doctor because he healed the sick, Mohammed gained a reputation as a visionary prophet. In Islamic texts it is stated that there can be no truthful dreams since Mohammed, because he had them all. For Mohammed, dreams were the vehicle of revelation essential for his role as prophet and visionary, whereas Christ laid no substantive claims to prophecy. Since he was the son of God, there was automatically a hotline, so to speak, established between Father and Son. More than that, since they were one, their communication could not be 'symbolic.'

MOROCCAN DREAM CLASSIFICATION AND INTERPRETATION

There persists in Morocco today a rich tradition of dream interpretation (see Kilborne 1978). In addition to reflecting daily experience, Moroccan dream interpretations and dream classifications reflect also the domains of folk Islam and classical Islam, popular as well as orthodox beliefs, attitudes, and doctrines.

Moroccan dream classifications indicate a split between truthful, divinity-inspired dreams (i.e., dreams that square with the orthodox written tradition) and deceitful dreams coming from all other sources. However, characterizing Moroccan dream books in this way does not do justice to the wealth of material they contain about the world view of Moroccans and the meanings of daily experiences. Indeed, it would seem that the basis of Moroccan dream interpretation is akin to the dream book of Artemidorus: it has its roots in the complexity of interpersonal situations, however much interpreters and dreamers would wish it to be prescriptive.

Interested readers may wish at this point to consult the appendix to this chapter in order to acquire some familiarity with specific schemata of dream classification on which subsequent discussions are based. Of the questions that come to mind when comparing the various similarities and differences among these classes, one stands out: that between truth and falsehood in dreams. Generally speaking, we in our modern tradition assume that only waking experience is truthful, and that all dreams are deceitful – an attitude consistent with most Christian doctrine. Luther, who one might have thought was not unduly preoccupied with dreams, begged God not to send him any, because he was so afraid he could not tell a true dream from a false one.

Even if, in principle, the truth of the religious category of veridical dreams is assumed, there are a variety of meanings in terms of which dreamers in Morocco perceive and interpret their dreams. Thus distinctions made between categories of dreams tend to reflect ideals and values, not simply to describe realities, like classifications in the natural sciences. As Moroccans are fascinated by the social life around them and are often extremely perceptive and keen observers of their fellows, and as these traits find expression in folk Islamic beliefs and practices, it would indeed seem odd if the category of 'bad dreams' always drew universal condemnation. What matters for our purposes is how the

various categories are *used*, how they *function* in social contexts and for individual actors.

One cannot help suspecting that the residual category of deceitful dreams (because they are mundane and not God-sent) is somewhat like Satan in Milton's *Paradise Lost*: of far more interest psychologically than the divine veridical counterpart. Milton makes Satan in many respects more attractive than God, who is flat and boring. Similarly, deceitful dreams afford a kind of interest which 'veridical' dreams do not have. The question is: What kind?

I suggest that an exploration of deceitful dreams will enable us to understand some rather fundamental elements in the Moroccan world view. Consider the widespread beliefs in the evil eye, and in jealousy, envy, and rivalry as explanations for conflict. Consider also the Islamic ideal of the good man, who has truthful dreams. Consider thirdly the ways in which Moroccan beliefs in *djinn* (spirits good and bad who oversee daily social interaction) articulate experiences interpreted as relating to 'goodness' and 'badness.' They provide a way both of projecting unwanted hostile feelings on to spirits and of attempting to deal with an inner world of suspicion and jealousy. In the light of this, it is hardly surprising that the vast majority of dreams should be thought potentially dangerous. Indeed, dreams in the ancient Near East had been so regarded.

If, as I am arguing here, such defensive projective mechanisms are indeed an essential part of the beliefs in the *djinn*, then dreams in which these *djinn* appear, and dreams believed to be produced by the *djinn*, need to be considered together, as do dream interpretations that depend upon these evil-intentioned spirits and men. Because dreamers are uncomfortable with feelings of hostility, rivalry, and suspiciousness, it is far more convenient to have dreams in which these emotions play a major part interpreted. In this way it appears that there really *is* an enemy there and thus the suspiciousness is justified; since reality *is* full of evil intentions, the hostility is self-defense.

Furthermore, truthful dreams are associated with safety, as deceitful dreams are associated with harm, revealing the evil intentions of spirits, family, friends, and enemies. Only God-sent dreams can really be trusted. But two difficulties arise here: first, how does one know whether a particular dream is a God-sent dream and not a fake sent by Satan? Second, how can it be that many actors who have never been sure of experiencing truthful dreams persist in believing in them?

Both questions indicate individual mistrust, which motivates reliance on an external authority figure who can assert and judge knowledge in dreams. Ideas about dream interpretation in Morocco, so it would seem, express real, experienced and basic mistrust. But they also underlie beliefs in truthful dreams, beliefs which go counter to experience. These beliefs in dreams rely upon idealization, a process analogous to the construction of heaven, which is believed in even if nobody has ever been there and returned to describe it.

Interpreted this way, Moroccan perceptions of dream categories appear quite consonant with the tendency to perceive enemies when interpreting dreams. Most dreams, indeed virtually all dreams, cannot be trusted any more than people can, and this mistrust is itself one powerful motive behind taking dreams to be interpreted, telling them, and using them in different ways in communication. In fact, one method of interpreting dreams in Morocco is to spell out to the dreamer specifically what is not to be trusted. And it does appear that Moroccan dreams tend to confirm feelings that the world is not to be trusted, not to be taken at face value, and that there is much psychological saliency to valuing dreams as deceitful.

Thus, I suggest, Moroccan perceptions of basic categories of dreams – what we might consider a dichotomy of truthful versus deceitful dreams – are understood by Moroccans in several ways. Whereas on the surface, good, truthful, or God-sent dreams logically are more important in religious dogma (in terms of ideals), psychologically and experientially it is the deceitful dreams which have more psychological salience. Deceitful dreams correspond to the basic sense of mistrust which is expressed in beliefs in *djinn* and in the use of envy to explain social relationships. These deceitful dreams reflect the social fabric of the life in Morocco and various levels of daily experience. It is therefore on their interpretation that *fqih* and other professional dream interpreters naturally concentrate. In short, because Moroccans value deceitful dreams as expressions of psychological realities and everyday experiences, the category is equally as important as God-sent, truthful, or good dreams. 'True' might mean 'better' or more valuable in terms of what the dreamers wish, but 'deceitful' would seem to square far better with the world as experienced.

I have argued that to Moroccans deceitful dreams are culturally and psychologically as important as God-sent dreams. The argument has proceeded from a re-examination of the more obvious interpretations of

the basic dual categories, *ruya* and *ahlam*, God-sent and deceitful dreams respectively. That a dream is believed to be God-sent does not explain how it is understood by Moroccans to be good; nor does it enable us to understand how it is used in social interactions. One of the psychological functions of beliefs in the possibility of 'true' dreams (which few people have) is to allow for the maintenance of ideals in the face of experienced mistrust and uncertainty. Moreover, if one looks at the overwhelming proportion of deceitful dreams, and at the interest in deceit generally, the meanings of true as well as of deceitful dreams in Moroccan experience become considerably clearer.

Furthermore, in view of the confusion, moral repugnance, and indignation felt by most Europeans when confronted with problems of lying and truth in Morocco (and the Near East generally), it seems paradoxical that in dreams Moroccans should make such a clear distinction. I have suggested that the classification reflects a *wish* for clarity, a clarity which simply does not exist in waking experience. Given then the prevalence of what appears to us as lying and deceit, it is psychologically plausible that the emphasis on the category of truthful dreams corresponds to wishes that there be areas of experience which, at least in principle, are thoroughly trustworthy.

It would appear therefore that the very categorization of dreams into good (*ruya*) and deceitful (*ahlam*) is part of a belief system in the Weberian or Durkheimian sense; that this is not a structural opposition experienced as evidence of a split between official and folk Islam; and that individuals are motivated to perceive dreams as they do because of their experience as Moroccans. Deceitful dreams are psychologically salient because they correspond to, and make palpable, Moroccan beliefs in the evil eye, the presence of enemies, and in easily offended, revengeful *djinn*.

There is yet another consideration which further strengthens my arguments concerning Moroccan dream classification and some of the basic meanings of the *ruya/ahlam* distinction. This is the tendency to split dreams into those that come from a divinity and those that come from inside (i.e., from the body or the self).

Thus, in Nabulsi's two categories, 'God-sent dreams' and 'deceitful dreams' (see the appendix to this chapter), the latter are rooted in internal individual wishes, ambition, or confusion; they are sexual dreams, dreams sent by Satan the deceiver. In Hadj Brahime's three categories, 'God-sent dreams,' 'warning dreams,' and 'dreams coming

from self and body,' dreams are also categorized depending on their origin or their cause. Thus each type of dream bears its own trademark. Ahmed reproduces essentially the same classification: messenger dreams, warning dreams, preoccupation dreams, and sexual dreams. Consequently, the classification is essentially between dreams from outside (from the divinity, immortal messages or divinatory signs) and dreams from inside (deceitful dreams sent by Satan). Furthermore, dreams originating in the self are deceitful.

One might interpret the mistrust of what comes from within in relation to the projective beliefs in evil beings (*djinn*) and in the jealousy (evil eye) of friends and neighbors. Significantly, internal mistrust is frequently interpreted by dream interpreters as symbolic of external threats. In short, Moroccan notions of the self, particularly those persecutory ideas that depend upon evil and envious family and neighbors to validate individual denial, are seen to be part of the context in terms of which basic dream classification belief systems are maintained, interpreted, and understood.

CONCLUSIONS

If dream classification expresses world view, and if it is likely to change both with the cultural context and with the kind of place dreams have in cultural belief systems, then it can be of far more use to anthropologists than it has been in the past. I have argued here that in ancient Mesopotamia, dreams which come down to us (i.e., those that were recorded) reflect above all the political, social, and religious status of the dreamers, who were kings and prominent figures. By contrast, in the Graeco-Roman world of Artemidorus the meaning of dreams is far more dependent upon context than upon the dreamer's place in the social order (i.e., his rank per se). Indeed, the very cosmopolitanism of the period and the secular, methodical approach used by Artemidorus provides a strikingly different view of the world from that of Mesopotamia, one which is far more complex and diverse. This is of course due partly to the difference in the nature of the documents and partly to the social importance of dream interpretation in the world of Artemidorus where interpretations of message dreams could be subordinated to other concerns. For Artemidorus, context and the weave of daily experience are extremely important in determining the meaning of a dream; for the inhabitants of ancient Mesopotamia, the

status of the dreamer is relatively more important. In sum, the popular preoccupation with the social fabric of daily life is one of the motives behind the interest in classification and observation reflected by the dream book of Artemidorus. By contrast, in ancient Mesopotamia, where dreams are seen to be related to the status of the dreamer, social context is less prominent. To use an analogy, it seems somewhat as though when one 'pulls up' a dream in ancient Mesopotamia, one gets a long tap root and relatively little soil; but when one does the same thing in the world of Artemidorus, the root system is vast and the ramifications far-reaching.

In Morocco there is a deferential system of attitudes and wishes – orthodox, idealized, and Islamic – built into images of 'good dreamers': they are pious men, generally known as such already in the society, and often have political power and social visibility. As such, these men are venerated. In this respect, dream interpretation in Morocco may be compared to that of ancient Mesopotamia. But the folk system of dream interpretation feels very similar to that of Artemidorus, and attends to the interests and concerns of daily life while interpreting them. Alongside the more stereotyped – because less realistic, less familiar – idealized category of 'good dreams' we find those which express the popular tradition of examining the here-and-now for evidence substantiating internal mistrust projected as beliefs in *djinn*, in saints, and in the evil eye. Hence the psychological saliency of the Moroccan system of dream classification and interpretation. Dream interpretation provides an arena in which real and imaginary spades can be called spades.

In short, examinations of dream classification cannot be expected to reveal the same kinds of cultural features or provide the same kinds of insights in these three societies because they are rooted differently in each one. In each, an understanding of the functions of dreams and dream interpretation provides us with essentially different, although comparable, insights into cultural processes. No two systems of dream classification can be expected to reflect the values, beliefs, and behaviors (i.e., the cultures) of their members in the same way.

When dream classification is approached not as a reflection of logical 'scientific' thinking, or in terms of Durkheim's dichotomy of sacred and profane, then it is no longer necessary to understand or evaluate it as absolute or universal. The classificatory system of dreams and dream interpretation may be grasped in relation to the motivations of the authors whose perceptions we conceptualize collectively as world view

or behavioral environment. When dream classification is approached in relation to beliefs and substantive epistemological issues, then anthropologists can see dream classes as social facts, study their functions, and better comprehend relative and universal meanings of the cultural experience and belief systems involved. Rather than indicating the 'unscientific' character of non-European thought, studies of dream classification underline the importance of assessing the cultural and psychological functions of the scientific organization of superstitious beliefs, as these reflect perceptions of the world.

My emphasis throughout this chapter has been on the cultural and psychological functions of the classificatory schema of dreams. I have argued that identifying or describing such systems, however important, is never sufficient. It is necessary to examine the ways in which these schemata are *used* by members of the culture, the ways in which these classificatory systems themselves represent the world view of the actors. In other words I am suggesting that classifications of dreams serve psychological and cultural functions relative to the conscious and unconscious purposes of the actors. In this respect they can be compared to teleological belief systems. However, that they are motivated does not mean that they are to be dismissed as unscientific or non-rational; it does not mean that we can assume an epistemological gap between rational, logical, scientific thought on the one hand, and teleological belief and superstition on the other. Indeed, I would suggest in closing that *all* classificatory systems, scientific and religious, Western and non-Western, have psychological and cultural functions that we, as students of human nature, need to understand.

NOTES

1. This chapter has been immeasurably improved by suggestions from various colleagues and friends including Melford E. Spiro, Jeffrey Alexander, and Barbara Tedlock. To these and other friends I am grateful.
2. 'Your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions' (Joel 2:28). 'And your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams' (Acts 2:17).
3. There is a copious literature on classification within anthropology: the standard work is that of Durkheim and Mauss (1963). A modern work which synthesizes for the

general reader much work done since is Needham (1981). In much of the recent anthropological literature on classification attention has been drawn to rather specific subjects: kinship, color categories, plant and animal taxonomies, and social stratification. The success of such studies in promoting a 'scientific' image of anthropology has not been inconsiderable. It is also worth noting that, structuralist methods and binary oppositions notwithstanding, religious belief, psychodynamics, and individual motivation have been relegated to a secondary status as objects of anthropological investigation.

4. Dream theories and methods of interpretation in Mediterranean countries, related to ancient Mesopotamian dream theories, have several distinctive features: the appearance of the tall man as a messenger figure, the practice of incubation, or temple sleeping, the obedience of directives given in dreams, and the performance of activities in certain sacred places. It is tempting to speculate that theories of the state – combined with political realities from Mesopotamia to ancient Greece and modern Mediterranean states – have fundamentally influenced the representation of authority, and might, in part, help to account for the similarity of dream theories and methods of interpretation in the Mediterranean.

APPENDIX

Basic Islamic dream categorization

1 *ruya*: message dreams sent by Allah (clear and important); prophetic dreams demonstrating righteousness of dreamer
2 *ahlam*: deceitful dreams coming from other sources

Nabulsi (1641–1731)

1 *God-sent dreams*: appearance of Mohammed or one of his messengers, clear and unconfused, 'good' and truthful
2 *deceitful dreams*: rooted in individual wishes, ambition or confusion; sexual dreams (nocturnal emission) requiring ablutions and not needing an interpretation; dreams sent by sorcerers (both *djinn* and human) and which are as painful for dreamer as those sent by Satan; dreams sent by Satan; dreams produced by humors when they are liquid and cloudy; the 'return' – the old dreamer sees himself as a young man

Hadj Brahime (Moroccan informant from the Souss)

1 *bouchra min Allah*: God-sent dreams, peaceful and happy
2 *takouif*: fearsome dreams, warning dreams (do not do this or that)

3 *hadith en nafs*: dreams rooted in physical needs and day residue (*nafs* are passions or appetites); Hadj Brahime added 'each *nafs* must die'

1 *messenger dreams*
2 *warning dreams*
3 *preoccupation dreams*: problems and day residues
4 *'normal' (sexual) dreams*

Mohammed (Moroccan informant in rural town near Meknes)

1 *message dreams*: dreamt at sanctuaries (marabouts) and other saintly or divinatory places
2 *warning dreams*: advice, recommendation about the future; ghosts of the dead returning from their tombs to deliver messages
3 *preoccupation dreams*: from within the self caused by love or hate; explained by the dreamer or if complex a seer (*fqih*) interprets
4 *'normal' (day residue) dreams*: problem solving; disturb a parent when told; expectable dreams