

THE NATURE OF SLEEP AND DREAMS

By Helgi Pjeturss, Ph. D.

After endeavouring for some years to understand the nature of sleep, I decided, in 1902, to take up a more special investigation into the nature of dreaming. The reason for my doing this was as follows: Psychologists write of visualizing an idea; that is, making thought visible, much as if this faculty of visualization were as normal to man as that of seeing. I found, however, that I had no ability to visualize. Ideas were to me something quite different from concrete pictures. I never once succeeded in seeing a face before me, unless I was looking at a face. My memories were never mental pictures. It took me considerable time to arrive at the conclusion that I had not a trace of the ability to visualize ideas. But then, in comparing consciousness in the waking state and during sleep (that is in dreams), I found an enormous difference. Thinking about a thing or a state when awake, was radically different from seeing the thing or experiencing the state; but dreaming about a thing or a state was the same as seeing or experiencing. The more I thought of it, the more remarkable it seemed that although in sleep the sense activities are practically suspended, the contents of the sleeping mind are very much as if the senses were working. In short, dreams are not, or only to a slight extent, thoughts and reminiscences, but are, as it were, sentient and active life. There was my problem, and it seemed to me that it must necessarily be of the greatest psychological importance. Time has proved that the problem is still more important than I had suspected, and is, in fact, of the most fundamental nature.

I set out, then, to find the cause of this difference between waking and sleep consciousness, and for years strove to find

the solution. But my efforts were in vain; the hypotheses I formed had to be abandoned. At last it struck me, when considering thought-transference, that if words could be transferred from one brain to another, the same ought to be the case with pictures (the brain-states accompanying the process of seeing). In the course of the many years' subsequent study it has become quite clear to me, that at last I had found a clue to the truth. And the understanding of the nature of dreams became the means for obtaining an insight into the nature of sleep and of life itself. For life is a vital charge, which is renewed during sleep. We can learn to observe distinctly the inflow of the vital current when sleep comes on, and how this current carries along with it the shadowy images of the incipient dream. During sleep we establish contact with a dream-giver — a person whose brain- and other nerve states are transferred to the sleeper. **What this person lives, the sleeper dreams, believing that he is himself experiencing the adventures of the dream-giver.** What the sleeper obtains from the dream-giver, however, is more or less mutilated and distorted, translated, so to say, according to the sleeper's disposition and experience. Dreams can be divided into groups, according to the intimacy of the rapport between dreamer and the dream-giver. It follows, therefore, that the different stages of a dream can belong to different groups. When rapport is slight and transference imperfect, the **pictures** from the brain of the dream-giver are transferred to the brain of the dreamer **much more easily** than the stream of thoughts accompanying the pictures. In the brain of the dreamer then, these pictures, in accordance with certain laws of association, are erroneously interpreted, and the dream consists of illusions, the sleeper believing that he is in the dream seeing things known to him. These are the **illusional dreams**, corresponding to the *enypnia* of the ancient dream-expert, Artemidoros, whose **Oneirokritikon** is the most interesting work on dreams I have read. When the transference from dream-giver to sleeper is more perfect, we have the vision-dream, the

oneiros of Artemidoros; and, as a rule, what is seen in such a dream, is foreign and unknown.

Here I arrived at a conclusion that was at first glance staggering. An analysis of the vision-dreams led to the inevitable conclusion that the dream-giver must be an inhabitant of some other planet. The human beings, animals, plants, buildings, landscapes, constellations, and other astronomical phenomena, seen very clearly in the vision-dreams, were such as do not exist on this planet or in its sky. **Incredible as it may seem, there is no conviction I hold with greater certainty than this, that psycho-physiological contact with the inhabitants of other planets, is a normal phenomenon of human existence.** It is this unsuspected communication with the inhabitants of other planets — I am not referring to the planets of our own solar system — which has given rise to the occult belief in other planes of being. The stagnation which has for thousands of years characterised occult theories, is sufficient proof that an insight of the truth has not been attained. There will be no stagnation when the discoveries here indicated have received the necessary attention.

Another staggering result I obtained was the discovery of what I call the Law of Determinants. For several years I had been endeavouring to trace how dreaming is influenced by happenings during waking life. At last I found, to my astonishment, that my dreams are influenced much less by my own thoughts and feelings than by those of the persons I have met in the course of the day. Such persons exercise so marked an influence on the current of energy creating the dream, that they can properly be spoken of as Determinants. For more than 12 years I have been investigating this law, and am coming to the conclusion that it will be found to be a cosmic law of the most fundamental importance.

The Occult Review, nóv. 1926.

Aths. Grein þessi, sem er einmitt ekki dulræns eðlis, átti að koma í tímaritinu Nature, en maður sem ég hélt að ég gæti treyst, og sendi grein-

ina til fyrirgreiðslu, misskildi svo algerlega sitt hlutverk, að hann endursendi mér greinina með þeim orðum, að þetta kæmi ekki heim við hans eigin skoðanir á eðli drauma! Sendi ég þá þeim elskulega manni, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle greinina, og fékk hann hana prentaða í The Occult Review, sem er eitt af bestu tímaritum sinnar tegundar. — Ég hygg, að ekki sé auðvelt að fara lengra en í þessari grein er gert, í að koma miklu efni fyrir í stuttu máli, og gætu þeir sem ritmennt stunda, einnig af þeirri ástæðu haft nokkurt gagn af því, að virða hana fyrir sér. Greinin hefir verið þýdd á frönsku og pólsku, og víða vakið nokkra eftirtekt.