

INTRODUCING FREUD:
Dreams (and Self-Analysis)

Tutor: Keith Barrett BA PhD
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Session 1

Every dream represents the fulfilment of a wish – Freud states in his masterpiece '*The Interpretation of Dreams*' (1900). But in most dreams dreamt by adults, the wish in question is deeply repressed, so the wish-fulfilment must be carefully disguised in the dream as we experience and remember it. The key to Freud's theory, therefore, is his account of the processes that disguise the true meaning of the dream, producing the dream we remember – the processes he calls the '**dream work**'. We will explore the theoretical background from which this conception emerged, and the steps that led to a practical procedure by means of which the hidden meaning of a dream could be revealed. We will also study in detail the processes that constitute the '**dream work**', and closely examine the dream of '**Irma's Injection**' – the most extended and detailed 'worked example' of interpretation.

Session 2

Freud made a crucial breakthrough in his theory when he understood the importance of childhood experiences in the formation of dreams. This insight opened up the possibility that one could psychoanalyse oneself through the interpretation of one's own dreams – and this is how Freud conducted his self-analysis. Thus, he analyses many dreams of his own in '*The Interpretation of Dreams*'. These analyses illustrate the application of his method of dream interpretation – and of his theory of the dream work - but since they were drawn from his self-analysis, they also give the book an auto-biographical dimension. Fortunately, we have another source – his letters to his intimate confidante Wilhelm Fliess – definitely not intended for publication, and this enables us to cross-check what he tells us. Putting these sources together we will attempt to reconstruct Freud's self-analysis, focussing both on its successes and on its inevitable limitations.

Session 3

After WW1, Freud revised his theory of dreams in order to take account of compulsively repeated dreams – such as those of soldiers traumatised in battle. We will examine his new thinking and compare Freud's work on dreams with that of Jung, reviewing the status of their contrasting approaches in psychotherapy today. We will also examine current theories of dreams based on the latest findings of sleep science, and discuss how well the ideas contained in Freud's masterpiece have fared, in the 120 years since its publication.