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# How Unconscious Metaphorical Thought
# Shapes Dreams

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## Unconscious Thought in Cognitive Science

Cognitive Science brings together empirical techniques for studying the mind from cognitive and developmental psychology, neuroscience, linguistics, and anthropology, as well as the modelling techniques from computer science. The result is an interdisciplinary study of the mind that asks very different questions than psychotherapists ask, and not surprisingly, gets very different answers.

Perhaps the most striking result obtained across the various branches of cognitive science is that most thought is unconscious -- though not in the sense that Freud meant by the term. To Freud, unconscious thought was thought that could, in principle, be brought to consciousness. It was thought that was, to a large extent, repressed -- too painful to be brought to consciousness. The cognitive unconscious is not like this at all. The kind of unconscious thinking that cognitive science studies cannot be done consciously. It is thinking that is extremely fast, automatic, effortless – and completely normal. It is what we call "common sense" – the most mundane of thought.

Moreover, cognitive science tends to study common modes of thought, not the thought of a particular individual or class. Since it studies normal thought processes, it is not concerned with pathology. It is concerned with what is common about how normal people ordinarily make sense of the world. For this reason, cognitive science and psychotherapy have seen themselves as having disjoint subject matter and have barely had any interaction at all.

I think this is unfortunate. To understand psychopathology, one needs to understand the workings of the normal mind. Correspondingly, psychopathology provides challenges to those who study the normal mind. The cognitive unconscious is not at all at odds with the Freudian unconscious. Both exist. But cognitive science has so far had nothing to say about the Freudian unconscious, since the techniques of analysis in the two fields are so different.

At first glance, the Freudian and cognitive forms of the unconscious look very different. For Freud, unconscious thought could be made conscious; but because it is "highly charged," it is repressed. The cognitive unconscious is of a different character. It is part of the mechanism of thought, by nature automatic and typically not subject to conscious control. It need not be highly charged at all; it consists of the most commonplace aspects of our conceptual system.

There are, however, similarities. What Freud called *symbolization, displacement, condensation,* and *reversal* appear to be the same mechanisms that

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cognitive scientists refer to as *conceptual metaphor, conceptual metonymy, conceptual blending,* and *irony.* But where Freud saw these as irrational modes of primary-process thinking, cognitive scientists have found that they are an indispensible part of ordinary rational thought, which is largely unconscious.

The relationship between thought and affect is a recurring theme in cognitive science. Antonio Damasio (Damasio, 1994) has argued that ordinary means-end rationality requires emotional involvement. The argument is based on patients with aform of brain damage that leaves them emotionless; invariably such patients have trouble achieving their goals and make a mess of their lives. Conversely, Zoltàn Kövecses and I have shown that there is a metaphorical logic of emotion concepts (Lakoff, 1987, case study 3) and Kövecses (1990). Anger, for example, is conceptualized metaphorically in terms of heat, madness, a wild animal, and so on.

This chapter does not in any way attempt to provide an account of any aspect of psychopathology. Nor does it attempt to give a full theory of dreams, nor even to explain what the function of dreams is. Yet, in the cases that happen to have been studied, the dreams all seem to express either a deeply important wish, fear, or regret — typically one that the dreamer would not be able to discuss in public. Yet I feel that I have not done enough research on dreams to claim that all dreams work like this. But certainly many do.

The cases discussed all bear on the lives of the dreamers, and all of them, in one way or another, express immediate difficulties in the dreamer's life. This expression of difficulties (and in some cases, resolutions) is done through the use of our system of conventional metaphors. As we shall see, the system of metaphorical thought that we use in everyday life provides us with a language of dreams.

Metaphorical Thought

It was discovered in the late 1970's that the mind contains an enormous system of general conceptual metaphors -- ways of understanding relatively abstract concepts in terms of those that are more concrete. Much of our everyday language and thought makes use of such conceptual metaphors. To take a simple example, take the sentence "I'm weighed down by responsibilites." There is a form of metaphorical thought operating here, namely, DIFFICULTIES ARE BURDENS. This way of conceptualizing difficulties can be expressed in many different linguistic forms, e.g., "I'm **carrying a heavy load,**" "He's **shouldering** a lot of responsibility," "**Get off my back!**", and so on. As any therapist will immediately recognize, such metaphors can be made real, for example, in posture. Someone weighed down by responsibilities may adopt a posture as if he had a heavy load on his shoulders. Thus, metaphorical thought does not merely govern language and reasoning, but may be realized in behavior.

This chapter is about the way our ordinary conventional system of metaphorical thought shapes dreams -- and hence may provide a therapist with insights as to the nature of dreams. But before I turn to of dreams, I should spend a bit of time explicating in detail what I mean by "metaphorical thought."

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Imagine a love relationship described as follows:
Our relationship has **hit a dead-end street.**

Here love is being conceptualized as a journey, with the implication that the relationship is stalled, that the lovers cannot keep going the way they've been going, that they must turn back, or abandon the relationship altogether. This is not an isolated case. English has many everyday expressions that are based on a conceptualization of love as a journey, and they are used not just for talking about love, but for reasoning about it as well. Some are necessarily about love; others can be understood that way:

Look how **far** we've **come.** It's been a **long, bumpy road.** We can't **turn back** now. We're at a **crossroads.** We may have to **go our separate ways.** The relationship isn't **going anywhere.** We're **spinning our wheels.** Our relationship is **off the track.** The marriage is **on the rocks.** We may have to **bail out of** this relationship.

These are ordinary, everyday English expressions. They are not poetic, nor are they necessarily used for special rhetorical effect. Those like Look how far we've come, which aren't necessarily about love, can readily be understood as being about love.

As a linguist and a cognitive scientist, I ask two commonplace questions:

--Is there a general principle governing how these linguistic expressions about journeys are used to characterize love?

--Is there a general principle governing how our patterns of inference about journeys are used to reason about love when expressions such as these are used?

The answer to both is yes. Indeed, there is a single general principle that answers both questions. But it is a general principle that is neither part of the grammar of English, nor the English lexicon. Rather, it is part of the conceptual system underlying English: It is a principle for understanding the domain of love in terms of the domain of journeys. The principle can be stated informally as a metaphorical scenario:

The lovers are travelers on a journey together, with their common life goals seen as destinations to be reached. The relationship is their vehicle, and it allows them to pursue those common goals together. The relationship is seen as fulfilling its purpose as long as it allows them to make progress toward their common goals. The journey isn't easy. There are impediments, and there are places (crossroads) where a decision has to be made about which direction to go in and whether to keep traveling together.

The metaphor involves understanding one domain of experience, love, in terms of a very different domain of experience, journeys. More technically, the

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metaphor can be understood as a mapping (in the mathematical sense) from a source domain (in this case, journeys) to a target domain (in this case, love). The mapping is tightly structured. There are ontological correspondences, according to which entities in the domain of love (e.g., the lovers, their common goals, their difficulties, the love relationship, etc.) correspond systematically to entities in the domain of a journey (the travelers, the vehicle, destinations, etc.).

To make it easier to remember what mappings there are in the conceptual system, Johnson and I (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980) adopted a strategy for naming such mappings, using mnemonics which suggest the mapping. Mnemonic names typically have the form:

X IS Y,

where X is the name of the target domain and Y is the name of the source domain. In this case, the name of the mapping is LOVE IS A JOURNEY.

When I speak of the LOVE IS A JOURNEY metaphor, I am using a mnemonic for a set of ontological correspondences that characterize a mapping, namely:

THE LOVE-AS-JOURNEY MAPPING

--The lovers correspond to travelers.
--The love relationship corresponds to the vehicle.
--The lovers' common goals correspond to their common destinations on the journey.
--Difficulties in the relationship correspond to impediments to travel.

It is a common mistake to confuse the name of the mapping, LOVE IS A JOURNEY, for the mapping itself. The mapping is the set of correspondences. Thus, whenever I refer to a metaphor by a mnemonic like LOVE IS A JOURNEY, I will be referring to such a set of correspondences.

The LOVE-AS-JOURNEY mapping is a set of ontological correspondences that map knowledge about journeys onto knowledge about love. Such correspondences permit us to reason about love using the knowledge we use to reason about journeys. Let us take an example. Consider the expression, "We're stuck," said by one lover to another about their relationship. How is this expression about travel to be understood as being about their relationship?

"We're stuck" can be used of travel, and when it is, it evokes knowledge about travel. The exact knowledge may vary from person to person, but here is a typical example of the kind of knowledge evoked. The capitalized expressions represent entities in the ontology of travel, that is, in the source domain of the LOVE IS A JOURNEY mapping given above.

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Two TRAVELERS are in a VEHICLE, TRAVELING WITH COMMON DESTINATIONS. The VEHICLE encounters some IMPEDIMENT and gets stuck, that is, becomes nonfunctional. If they do nothing, they will not REACH THEIR DESTINATIONS. There are a limited number of alternatives for action:
•They can try to get it moving again, either by fixing it or getting it past the IMPEDIMENT that stopped it.
•They can remain in the nonfunctional VEHICLE and give up on REACHING THEIR DESTINATIONS.
•They can abandon the VEHICLE.
The alternative of remaining in the nonfunctional VEHICLE takes the least effort, but does not satisfy the desire to REACH THEIR DESTINATIONS.

The ontological correspondences that constitute the LOVE IS A JOURNEY metaphor map the ontology of travel onto the ontology of love. In so doing they map this scenario about travel onto a corresponding love scenario in which the corresponding alternatives for action are seen. Here is the corresponding love scenario that results from applying the correspondences to this knowledge structure. The target domain entities that are mapped by the correspondences are capitalized:

Two LOVERS are in a LOVE RELATIONSHIP, PURSUING COMMON LIFE GOALS. The RELATIONSHIP encounters some DIFFICULTY, which makes it nonfunctional. If they do nothing, they will not be able to ACHIEVE THEIR LIFE GOALS. There are a limited number of alternatives for action:
•They can try to get it moving again, either by fixing it or getting it past the DIFFICULTY.
•They can remain in the nonfunctional RELATIONSHIP, and give up on ACHIEVING THEIR LIFE GOALS.
•They can abandon the RELATIONSHIP.
The alternative of remaining in the nonfunctional RELATIONSHIP takes the least effort, but does not satisfy the desire to ACHIEVE LIFE GOALS.

This is an example of an inference pattern that is mapped from one domain to another. It is via such mappings that we apply knowledge about travel to love relationships.

## Metaphors are not mere words

What constitutes the LOVE-AS-JOURNEY metaphor is not any particular word or expression. It is the ontological mapping across conceptual domains, from the source domain of journeys to the target domain of love. The metaphor is not just a matter of language, but of thought and reason. The language is secondary. The mapping is primary, in that it sanctions the use of source domain language and inference patterns for target domain concepts. The mapping is

conventional, that is, it is a fixed part of our conceptual system, one of our conventional ways of conceptualizing love relationships.

This view of metaphor is thoroughly at odds with the traditional view of metaphor. The traditional view includes the following claims:

(1) Metaphors are linguistic expressions (as opposed to conceptual mappings).

(2) Metaphors use words from one literal domain to express concepts in another literal domain, but there is no such thing as metaphorical thought or metaphorical reasoning where inference patterns from one domain are applied to another domain.

(3) Metaphors are based on similarity: words from one domain express similar concepts in other domains.

(4) Metaphorical language is not part of ordinary, everyday, conventional language, but rather part of poetic or especially rhetorical language.

All these claims are false. For example, if metaphors were merely linguistic expressions, we would expect different linguistic expressions to be different metaphors. Thus, "We've hit a dead-end street" would constitute one metaphor. "We can't turn back now" would constitute another, entirely different metaphor. "Their marriage is on the rocks" would involve still a different metaphor. And so on for dozens of examples. Yet we don't seem to have dozens of different metaphors here. We have one metaphor, in which love is conceptualized as a journey. The mapping tells us precisely how love is being conceptualized as a journey. And this unified way of conceptualizing love metaphorically is realized in many different linguistic expressions.

In addition, we saw above that inference patterns from the travel domain can be used to reason about love. Hence, metaphorical reasoning does exist. As to similarity, there is nothing inherently similar between love and journeys, yet they are linked metaphorically. Finally, all of the metaphorical expressions we looked at in the LOVE IS A JOURNEY metaphor are ordinary, everyday expressions, rather than poetic or especially rhetorical expressions.

It should be noted that contemporary metaphor theorists commonly use the term "metaphor" to refer to the conceptual mapping, and the term "metaphorical expression" to refer to an individual linguistic expression (like **dead-end street**) that is sanctioned by a mapping. We have adopted this terminology for the following reason: Metaphor, as a phenomenon, involves both conceptual mappings and individual linguistic expressions. It is important to keep them distinct. Since it is the mappings that are primary and that state the generalizations that are our principal concern, we have reserved the term "metaphor" for the mappings, rather than for the linguistic expressions.

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In the literature of the field, small capitals like LOVE IS A JOURNEY are used as mnemonics to name mappings. Thus, when we refer to the LOVE IS A JOURNEY metaphor, we are refering to the set of correspondences discussed above. The English sentence "Love is a journey," on the other hand, is a metaphorical expression that is understood via that set of correspondences.

## Generalizations

The LOVE IS A JOURNEY metaphor is a conceptual mapping that characterizes a generalization of two kinds:
•Polysemy generalization: A generalization over related senses of linguistic expressions, e.g., **dead-end street, crossroads, stuck, spinning one's wheels, not going anywhere**, and so on.
•Inferential generalization: A generalization over inferences across different conceptual domains.

That is, the existence of the mapping provides a general answer to two questions:
•Why are words for travel used to describe love relationships?
•Why are inference patterns used to reason about travel also used to reason about love relationships.

Correspondingly, from the perspective of the linguistic analyst, the existence of such cross-domain pairings of words and of inference patterns provides evidence for the existence of such mappings.

## Novel extensions of conventional metaphors

The fact that the LOVE IS A JOURNEY mapping is a fixed part of our conceptual system explains why new and imaginative uses of the mapping can be understood instantly, given the ontological correspondences and other knowledge about journeys. Take the song lyric,

--We're driving in the fast lane on the freeway of love.

The traveling knowledge called upon is this: When you drive in the fast lane, you go a long way in a short time and it can be exciting and dangerous. The general metaphorical mapping maps this knowledge about driving into knowledge about love relationships. The danger may be to the vehicle (the relationship may not last) or the passengers (the lovers may be hurt, emotionally). The excitement of the love-journey is sexual. Our understanding of the song lyric is a consequence of the pre-existing metaphorical correspondences of the LOVE-AS-JOURNEY metaphor. The song lyric is instantly comprehensible to speakers of English because those metaphorical correspondences are already part of our conceptual system.

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## Motivation

Each conventional metaphor, that is, each mapping, is a fixed pattern of conceptual correspondences across conceptual domains. As such, each mapping defines an open-ended class of potential correspondences across inference patterns. When activated, a mapping may apply to a novel source domain knowledge structure and characterize a corresponding target domain knowledge structure.

Mappings should not be thought of as processes, or as algorithms that mechanically take source domain inputs and produce target domain outputs. Each mapping should be seen instead as a fixed pattern of ontological correspondences across domains that may, or may not, be applied to a source domain knowledge structure or a source domain lexical item. Thus, lexical items that are conventional in the source domain are not always conventional in the target domain. Instead, each source domain lexical item may or may not make use of the static mapping pattern. If it does, it has an extended lexicalized sense in the target domain, where that sense is characterized by the mapping. If not, the source domain lexical item will not have a conventional sense in the target domain, but may still be actively mapped in the case of novel metaphor. Thus, the words freeway and fast lane are not conventionally used of love, but the knowledge structures associated with them are mapped by the LOVE IS A JOURNEY metaphor in the case of "We're driving in the fast lane on the freeway of love."

## Imageable Idioms

Many of the metaphorical expressions discussed in the literature on conventional metaphor are idioms. On classical views, idioms have arbitrary meanings. But within cognitive linguistics, the possibility exists that they are not arbitrary, but rather motivated. That is, they do arise automatically by productive rules, but they fit one or more patterns present in the conceptual system. Let us look a little more closely at idioms.

An idiom like "spinning one's wheels" comes with a conventional mental image, that of the wheels of a car stuck in some substance—either in mud, sand, snow, or on ice, so that the car cannot move when the motor is engaged and the wheels turn. Part of our knowledge about that image is that a lot of energy is being used up (in spinning the wheels) without any progress being made, that the situation will not readily change of its own accord, that it will take a lot of effort on the part of the occupants to get the vehicle moving again—and that may not even be possible.

The LOVE-AS-JOURNEY metaphor applies to this knowledge about the image. It maps this knowledge onto knowledge about love relationships: A lot of energy is being spent without any progress toward fulfilling common goals, the

situation will not change of its own accord, it will take a lot of effort on the part of the lovers to make more progress, and so on. In short, when idioms that have associated conventional images, it is common for an independently-motivated conceptual metaphor to map that knowledge from the source to the target domain. For a survey of experiments verifying the existence of such images and such mappings, see Gibbs 1990.

## Mappings at the superordinate level

In the LOVE IS A JOURNEY mapping, a love relationship corresponds to a vehicle. A vehicle is a superordinate category that includes such basic-level categories as car, train, boat, and plane. Indeed, the examples of vehicles are typically drawn from this range of basic level categories: car ( long bumpy road, spinning our wheels), train (off the track), boat (on the rocks, foundering), plane (just taking off, bailing out). This is not an accident: in general, we have found that mappings are at the superordinate rather than the basic level. Thus, we would be surprised to find fully general submappings like A LOVE RELATIONSHIP IS A CAR; when we find a love relationship conceptualized as a car, we also tend to find it conceptualized as a boat, a train, a plane, etc. It is the superordinate category VEHICLE not the basic level category CAR that is in the general mapping in this case, and that is common in the system (though there may be cases where it is not so).

It should be no surprise that the generalization is at the superordinate level, while the special cases are at the basic level. After all, the basic level is the level of rich mental images and rich knowledge structure. (For a discussion of the properties of basic-level categories, see Lakoff, 1987, pp. 31-50.) A mapping at the superordinate level maximizes the possibilities for mapping rich conceptual structure in the source domain onto the target domain, since it permits many basic-level instances, each of which is information rich.

Thus, a prediction is made about conventional mappings: the categories mapped will tend to be at the superordinate rather than basic level. Thus, one tends not to find mappings like A LOVE RELATIONSHIP IS A CAR or A LOVE RELATIONSHIP IS A BOAT. Instead, one tends to find both basic-level cases (e.g., both cars and boats), which indicates that the generalization is one level higher, at the superordinate level of the vehicle. In most of the hundreds of cases of conventional mappings studied so far, it has been borne out that superordinate categories that are used in mappings.

There are, however, occasional cases where basic-level categories seem to show up in mappings, or where it is not clear whether a category should be considered basic-level. For example, anger is a basic emotion. Should it be considered a basic-level concept? There is no shortage of conceptual metaphors for anger: ANGER IS A HOT FLUID IN A CONTAINER, ANGER IS MADNESS, and so on. It is not clear whether anger should not be considered a basic-level

category or a case where a basic-level category occurs in a mapping. Another case will be discussed below: In the IMPOTENCE IS BLINDNESS metaphor (observed by Freud), there is a submapping that TESTICLES ARE EYES. This certainly involves basic-level concepts. It is not clear what significance this has, if any, for the theory of metaphor. There is nothing in the general theory that requires mappings to be on the superordinate level. It is simply an empirical fact that they tend to occur that way. This tendency may just follow from the fact that mappings at the superordinate level do more conceptual work than mappings at lower levels. It could be that mappings tend to be optimized for information content, but that occasional mappings at the basic-level occur for other reasons, for example, when there is an experiential basis for a mapping at the basic level but not at the superordinate level.

In the remainder of this chapter, when I speak of a "metaphor" or a "conceptual metaphor," I shall be referring to a mapping of the sort we have just discussed. With this example of a conceptual metaphor in place, let us turn to the relationship between conceptual metaphor and dreams.

## Metaphor and Dreams

What I have to say about dreams is not entirely new. The basic point goes back to a remark of Freud's in The Interpretation of Dreams, in a discussion of dream symbolism (Strachey translation, New York: Avon Books, 1965, section VI.E., p. 386):

> ... this symbolism is not peculiar to dreams, but is characteristic of unconscious ideation . . . and it is to be found in folklore, and in popular myths, legends, linguistic idioms, proverbial wisdom and current jokes, to a more complete extent than in dreams.

It is my job, as a linguist and a cognitive scientist, to study systematically what Freud called "unconscious ideation" of a symbolic nature. I specialize in the study of conceptual systems -- the largely unconscious systems of thought in terms of which we think, and on which ordinary everyday language is based. I do this largely on the basis of the systematic study of what Freud called "linguistic idioms."

What I and my colleagues have found, in a decade and a half of study, is that, as Freud suggested, we have systems of "unconscious ideation" of a symbolic nature. Part of this is a very large system of conceptual metaphor and metonymy, and I and my colleagues and students have been tracing out this system in extensive detail. Freud was right when he suggested that this system is even more elaborately used in ordinary "linguistic idioms" than in dreams.

Having worked out a very large part of this system for English, I would like to show in some detail how it functions in dreams. Interestingly enough,

Freud and other dream analysts have not already done this. Neither Freud nor other psychoanalysts have been interested in working out the details of the system of mundane metaphoric thought, though they implicitly recognized the existence of such a mode of thought and have made use of it implicitly as part of dream interpretation . The job of working out the details of the metaphor system has fallen to linguists and cognitive scientists. Freud and many of his followers were interested more in sexual symbolism -- metaphors of a tabooed nature. But what we find through the study of everyday language is that unconscious symbolic thought is, for the most part, not sexual or tabooed. Tabooed thought only rarely shows up in ordinary everyday conventional language. What I will be doing is thus something that other dream analysts have not already done. It is, if anything, the tame part of dream analysis -- the study of how unconscious symbolic thought of the most ordinary nontabooed kind shows up in dreams.

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a set of examples of commonplace dreams in which our ordinary system of metaphor mediates between the overt content of the dream and the way we understand dreams as applying to our everyday lives. In the examples of dream interpretations that I will be discussing, conceptual metaphor plays the following role:

Let D = the overt content of the dream. Let M = a collection of conceptual metaphors from our conceptual system Let K = knowledge about the dreamer's history and everyday life Let I = an interpretation of the dream in terms of the dreamer's life

That is, I is the interpreted meaning of the dream, which the interpreter hopes he has accurately portrayed. The relationship between the dream and its interpretation is:

D --M--> I, given K: Metaphors map the dream onto the interpretation of the dream, given relevant knowledge of the dreamer's life.

D is what Freud called the "manifest content" of the dream and I is what he called the "latent content."

If this is correct, then the system of conceptual metaphor plays a critical role in the interpretation of dreams. However, it cannot be used in isolation, without knowledge of the dreamer's everyday life to yield a meaningful interpretation. This will become clear in the cases to be discussed below.

I, the interpretation of the dream, can be understood in two ways:

The Weak Interpretation: I is the interpretation ascribed to the dream by an interpreter -- either another party or the dreamer on conscious reflection.

The Strong Interpretation: I is the hidden meaning of the dream to the dreamer.

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The weak claim of this chapter is that the our everyday system of conventional metaphor is employed whenever an interpreter interprets a dream. It is part of what defines a plausible interpretation. I believe I can demonstrate this beyond doubt.

But the stronger claim is more interesting: The metaphor system plays a generative role in dreaming -- mediating between the meaning of the dream to the dreamer and what is seen, heard, and otherwise experienced dynamically in the act of dreaming. Given a meaning to be expressed, the metaphor system provides a means of expressing it concretely -- in ways that can be seen and heard. That is, the metaphor system, which is in place for waking thought and expression, is also available during sleep, and provides a natural mechanism for relating concrete images to abstract meanings. The dreamer may well, of course, not be aware, upon waking, of the meaning of the dream since he did not consciously direct the choice of dream imagery to metaphorically express the meaning of the dream.

The stronger claim is harder to demonstrate, and I cannot demonstrate it by the methods of the linguist. At best I can make a plausible case for it by providing plausible interpretations -- interpretations of what the dream can plausibly have meant to the dreamer, given the concerns of his everyday life.

Before we proceed, there are several points that need to be made. First, it is important to clarify what I mean by "unconscious" in the expression "unconscious conceptual system." Freud used the term to mean thoughts that were repressed, but might in some cases be brought to consciousness. But the term "unconscious" is used very differently the cognitive sciences. Most of the kinds of thought discussed in the cognitive sciences operates, like the rules of grammar and phonology, below a level that we could possibly have conscious access to or control over.

It is possible, through linguistic analysis, to discover what metaphors one uses in unconscious thought, and to discuss them overtly. For example, you might discover that you think in terms of the LOVE IS A JOURNEY metaphor, and then have a discussion about the way you've used the metaphor. But there is no way to get conscious control over all unconscious uses of that metaphor and other metaphors in your conceptual system. It is like discussing a rule of grammar or phonology consciously, without being able to control all the rules of your grammar and phonology in every sentence you speak. The system of metaphors, although unconscious, is not "repressed" -- just as the system of grammatical and phonological rules that structure one's language is unconscious but not repressed. The unconscious discovered by cognitive science is just not like the Freudian unconscious.

Second, the interpretations I will be offering may well seem obvious or pedestrian. Indeed, that is their point. The everyday metaphor system characterizes the most normal and natural of interpretations. My purpose is to

say exactly why there are normal, natural interpretations of dreams. As a consequence, I will be starting where most dream analysts end. Most dream analysts are satisfied when they arrive at an intuitively plausible interpretation of a dream. I will be starting with intuitively plausible analyses and trying to show exactly what makes them intuitively plausible.

Third, as I said above, I cannot prove that the analyses I will be giving are the "right" ones, nor are they the only ones. What I claim to show is that they are yielded by the metaphor system given a choice of K, a selected portion of knowledge of the dreamer's everyday life. A different choice of relevant knowledge, K', could produce a completely different interpretation.

Fourth, I assume that dreaming is a form of thought. Powerful dreams are forms of thought that express emotionally powerful content. Two of the main results of cognitive science are that most thought is unconscious and most thought makes use of conceptual metaphor. Dreams are also a form of unconscious thought that makes use of conceptual metaphor. As a form of thought, dreams can express content: desires, fears, solutions to problems, fantasies, and so on. If Freud was right in suggesting that something like repression exists, that there are some thoughts that we don't want to be aware that we are thinking, then the use of the conscious metaphor system in dreams is a perfect way for the unconscious mind to hide thoughts from the conscious mind while nonetheless thinking them.

Fifth, since dreams are a form of thought, dreams make use of metaphor because thought typically makes use of metaphor. Since dreams are not consciously monitored, they do not make consciously monitored use of metaphor. Thus, the use of metaphor in dreams may seem to the conscious mind wild and incoherent.

Sixth, the imagery used in dreams is not arbitrary. It is constrained by the general metaphors used by the dreamer. The general metaphors are sets of correlations between source and target domains at the superordinate level. Dream imagery is chosen from the basic (and subordinate) level -- that is, from special cases of superordinate categories characterized by the general metaphors.

For example, suppose the dream is about love. One of the metaphors for love will be used in the dream. If it is LOVE IS A JOURNEY, then the dream imagery will be about a particular kind of journey, say a car trip. Then the dream images might include a car, roads, bridges, bad weather, etc. Because metaphorical thought is natural, the use of images in dream thought is also natural.

Seventh, I therefore claim that dreams are not just the weird and meaningless product of random neural firings, but rather a natural way by which emotionally charged fears, desires and descriptions are expressed.

Incidentally, what I am claiming is consistent with the claim that dreams are set off by random neural firings in the brain stem. It is possible that a fixed, conventional metaphor system could channel random neural firings into a meaningful dream. In other words, if dreams turn out to be triggered by random neural firings, it would not follow that the content of dreams is random.

Eighth, dreaming is a process with open-ended possibilities for metaphorical expression. What those possibilities are is determined by the fixed, general metaphors in the conceptual system. The fixed metaphors are fixed correspondences across conceptual domains at the superordinate level. Those fixed correspondences make it possible for basic level imagery to have systematic meaning. Since the possibilities for basic and subordinate level imagery is open ended, the fixed metaphorical correspondences allow for an open-ended range of possibilities in particular dream. Dream construction is a dynamic process that makes use of the fixed metaphorical correspondences to construct the image sequences that occur in dreams.

Thus, there is a sense in which dreaming is like speaking. We have fixed rules of grammar and phonology that constrain what sentences we can construct and what they can mean. But the rules, being general, permit an open-ended range of special cases that fit the rules. Similarly, our metaphor system might be seen as part of a `grammar of the unconscious' -- a set of fixed, general principles that permit an open-ended range of possible dreams that are constructed dynamically in accordance with fixed principles. To understand the system of metaphor is to understand those principles.

Ninth, I claim that deep and extensive knowledge of the dreamer's life is essential to pinpointing the meanings of dreams. Does that mean that dreams cannot have interpretations on their own, independent of what we know about the dreamer?

Well, yes and no. There is a certain well-demarcated range of typical emotional concerns in this culture: love, work, death, family, etc. It is a good bet that powerful dreams will be about one of those domains. That puts a constraint on what the target domains of metaphors are likely to be. Suppose each interpretation of a dream is about one of those domains. That means one can fix a single domain to be the target domain for all the metaphorical images used in the dream. The metaphor system allows each individual metaphorical image to have a wide range of interpretations. But if the dream is a long sequence of metaphorical images, then the choice of a single target domain limits the possibilities for interpretation of the whole collection of images. Thus, it might be possible to narrow the range of possible interpretations for a given dream without knowledge of the dreamer.

But even such a narrowed range of possibilities might be extremely large -- so large that one could not even come close to imagining the range of possibilities. Two mechanisms make even such a narrowed range of possibilities very large. First, there is the range of specific instances of a general metaphor. That could be an extremely large range. Second, there is what Turner and I (1989) have called the GENERIC IS SPECIFIC metaphor schema. This is a schema that allows for an open-ended range of metaphorical correspondences across domains. The use of that schema will described below. Its very use depends on detailed knowledge. These two mechanisms allow for such a broad range of possibilities that only detailed knowledge of the life of the dreamer can limit that range of possibilities to what the dream means to that dreamer.

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It should be said, however, that the wide range of possibilities permit an individual dream to have multiple meanings for a dreamer, and I claim that especially powerful dreams have commonly have multiple meanings.

In addition, because of the large range of possibilities permitted by the metaphor system, one person's dreams can have powerful meanings for other people. Other people's dreams hold for us the same fascination as myth and literature -- a possibility for finding meaning in our own lives. It is the operation of our metaphor systems that makes that possible.

The dream analyses to follow stress the importance of deep and extensive knowledge about the life of the dreamer. In each case, I have used a dream of someone I know very well, and it is only because I know the dreamer well that I feel confident of the interpretations.

## The Anthropologist's Dream

A woman I will call Maggie dreamt that she starting hiking on a pleasant, wide well-paved road. After a while, the road narrowed, turned to a dirt road, and started winding through the brush. The road got narrower and narrower and terrain got rough, and soon she found herself going uphill, sliding, going through heavy brush, pushing branches aside, and barely being able to move along the trail at all. Exhausted, she reached a clearing at the top of the hill. There she saw a friend of her's coming out of Trader Joe's. "Don't bother," he said, "The anthropologists have cleared it all out."

Maggie is an anthropologist. After many years of graduate school, fieldwork, and raising a family, she finally wrote her thesis and got her Ph.D. At the time she had started graduate school, there were abundant academic jobs for anthropologists. But by the time she finally got her degree, most of the jobs were taken. She took part-time jobs at various places for years hoping to get a full time job, with no success. At the time of the dream, she had finally given up on anthropology andwas starting out on a new career. Trader Joe's, in the city where she lives, is where the local academics go to buy the amenities of life: imported cheeses, wines, and so on.

The conventional metaphor that structures this dream is called The Event Structure Metaphor. It has a number of parts, among them:

•States are Locations
•Actions are Self-propelled motions.
•Purposes are Destinations.
•Means are Paths.
•Difficulties are Impediments to motion.

The STATES ARE LOCATIONS metaphor is used in expressions like "She is in love," "He is out of his depression." PURPOSES ARE DESTINATIONS lies behind the use of the word "goal" to express a purpose. It occurs in "reaching one's goals," "falling short of one's expectations," "progressing," and so on. The use of the path word "way" (as in "Go about it any way you want") to express the

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means of achieving a purpose is an instance of MEANS ARE PATHS. Thus, action designed to achieve a purpose is conceptualized in this metaphor as self-propelled motion along a path toward a destination. Difficulties in achieving one's purpose are naturally conceptualized as impediments to motion: things that make it harder to move, namely, things that get in your way, features of the terrain, burdens that weigh you down, and so on.

There is a second metaphor for achieving a purpose that enters into the dream, namely,

• Acheiving a purpose is eating.

Thus, you can "**smell** success", "be so close you can **taste it**," and enjoy the "**fruits** of your labor."

Much of the dream is an instance of DIFFICULTIES ARE IMPEDIMENTS TO MOTION. In the dream, her Purpose/Destination is to get a university job as an anthropologist. The path to such a job, which started out wide and easy to walk on is long, gets narrower, windier, covered with brush, and goes uphill. She encounters difficulties conceptualized as impediments to motion. She finally reaches the top of the hill -- the top of the academic ladder, the Ph.D. -- where she expects to be able to have desired objects -- academic jobs -- available to her. These are symbolized in the dreams by a metonymy in which the food symbolizing of academic success (imported cheeses and wines) stand for the academic jobs. In her town, that food is at Trader Joe's. "The anthropologists have cleaned it out" indicates that there is no food/jobs left.

The Blindness Dream

A man I will call Steve had the recurring dream that he had become blind: He would awaken his wife in the middle of night screaming out "I'm blind, I'm blind" hysterically, until his wife could wake him up, turn on the light, and show him that he could see.

Steve is a scrupulous, meticulous, and cautious academic who is always afraid that he doesn't know enough. In our everyday conceptual system, there is a metaphor that KNOWING IS SEEING, which appears in everyday expressions like:

I **see** what your getting at. His meaning was **clear**. You can't **pull the wool over my eyes**. This paragraph is a bit **murky**. What is your **viewpoint**?

Via this metaphor, "I can't see" maps onto "I don't know -- and can't find out." Steve, in his dream is expressing his constant fear: I'm ignorant, I'm ignorant.

But Steve's dream, as a powerful recurrent dream, is richer than that. Freud, in his interpretation of the Oedipus myth, observed that Oedipus' cutting

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out of his eyes was metaphorical castration, a metaphor that TESTICLES ARE EYES, and IMPOTENCE IS BLINDNESS. By virtue of this metaphor, being blinded is a just punishment for a sexual transgression, It is because this metaphor is in our conceptual system that we understand Oedipus' punishment as being just. Incidentally, contemporary popular culture also has a manifestation of this metaphor in the folk theory that if you masturbate, you'll go blind.

A linguistic expression of this metaphor occurred in the San Francisco Chronicle. It occurred during the trial of Elly Nessler in the California Gold Country north of Sacramento. During the trial of a man who was accussed of molesting her young son, Nessler came into the court with a gun and shot him in the head, killing him. During the trial, a Chronicle reporter asked one of the local citizens what he thought of Nessler's deed. He replied, "I'd have aimed lower and shot his eyes out." To the millions of readers of the Chronicle in the Bay Area, the EYES-AS-TESTICLES metaphor was immediately understandable.

One of the banes of Steve's existence is the feeling that he lacks power and influence, and is therefore unable to get things for himself and others. Steve's recurring dream occurred several times just before he took on his first importance administrative position, about which he feared that he would spend a lot of effort and not accomplish anything significant. We have a common cultural metaphor that WORLDLY POWER IS SEXUAL POTENCY, and POWERLESSNESS IS IMPOTENCE.

Linguistic examples of this metaphor abound in everyday life. One of the most celebrated was Lyndon Johnson's remark about a political enemy who he had the power to blackmail: "I've got his pecker in my pocket." Men threatening to get back at an enemy by rendering him powerless have been heard to say "I'll cut his balls off" or "I'll castrate him." Women who exert worldly power over men are regularly called "castrating bitches."

Via this metaphor, "I'm blind" in the dream expresses another of Steve's recurrent fears: "I'm powerless."

In addition, the dream has still further significance for Steve's life. Steve cannot have children because of a low sperm count. After years of trying to have children, Steve and his wife finally adopted children, and are happy and loving parents. Still, it was a traumatic experience in Steve's life not to be able to have biological children. Via the metaphor of IMPOTENCE IS BLINDNESS, when Steve cries out "I'm blind" he is expressing that trauma. Metaphorically, he is crying out "I'm impotent."

Steve's recurrent dream is powerful becauses it expresses three of the major fears and regrets in Steve's life. Metaphor is the mechanism that links the dream to what it means. What makes this dream extremely powerful is that it has not one metaphorical meaning, but three simultaneous ones, via three different metaphors. Two of these metaphors are expressed in everyday language: Both KNOWING IS SEEING and WORLDLY POWER IS SEXUAL POTENCY are part of the largely unconscious system of metaphorical thought that underlies much of our everyday language.  GENITALS ARE EYES and IMPOTENCE IS BLINDNESS has a very different status. It is an unconscious conceptual metaphor that is widespread in our culture, but is taboo. Thus, aside from the

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isolated case cited above, there is no large set of everyday linguistic expressions that are comprehended via this metaphor. For example, "My eyes hurt," does not mean "My testicles hurt" and "He's blind" does not mean " He's impotent."

Yet the metaphor seems to be present nonetheless, and there is a good reason why it should be -- it has the right kind of experiential basis to form a metaphor, namely, testicles are the same shape as eyes and losing one's eyesight renders one relatively powerless. The existence of such an experiential basis for the metaphor makes the metaphor natural. Apparently, the IMPOTENCE IS BLINDNESS metaphor, though taboo and unrealized in everyday language, is part of our conceptual systems. If it weren't, the Oedipus myth would seem senseless since blindness, in the absence of such a metaphor, would not seem a just punishment for incest.

There are several theoretical morals that arise from this set of interpretations of the Blindness Dream:

First, Freudian symbolism (as when the eyes symbolize genitals) can have the status of a tabooed metaphor, which has no reflection in everyday linguistic expressions, but is just as psychically real as other conceptual metaphors.

Second, tabooed metaphors (with no reflection in language) such as EYES ARE GENITALS and IMPOTENCE IS BLINDNESS  may combine with nontabooed metaphors such as WORDLY POWER IS SEXUAL POTENCY to jointly provide an interpretation of a dream. In short, much of Freud's symbolism is in the form of tabooed metaphors that are not segregated off by themselves, but which instead can combine with everyday metaphors.

Third, there can be multiple interpretations of dreams, which are simultaneous and all of which are equally natural. It is natural for a powerful recurrent dream to have such multiple meanings.

At this point I would like to turn to perhaps the most famous example of dream interpretation in the Western world, Joseph's interpretation of Pharoah's dream from Genesis.

Pharoah's Dream

In his dream, Pharoah is standing on the river bank, when seven fat cows come out of the river, followed by seven lean cows that eat the seven fat ones and still remain lean. Then Pharoah dreams again. This time he sees seven "full and good" ears of corn growing, and then seven withered ears growing after them. The withered ears devour the good ears. Joseph interprets the two dreams as a single dream. The seven fat cows and full ears are good years and the seven lean cows and withered ears are famine years that follow the good years. The famine years "devour" what the good years produce.

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Millions of people, both Jews and Christians, have read this passage and understood Joseph's interpretation as making sense, that is, as being a natural and reasonable dream interpretation. The question I am raising is what makes Joseph's interpretation make sense and seem natural -- so natural that no further discussion seems necessary. Even Freud, who cites the dream several times in The Interpretation of Dreams, sees not need to interpret it further.

It is my claim that this interpretation makes sense to us because of a collection of conceptual metaphors in our conceptual system -- metaphors that have been with us since Biblical times. The first metaphor used is: TIMES ARE MOVING ENTITIES. In this metaphor, there is an observer defining the present time standing, with the future in front and the past behind. Future times move toward him from the front; past times are in the rear moving away. Examples are:

The time for action is **here**. The time for waiting has **passed**. The revolution is **coming**. Times **flies**. Time **flows by**.

This metaphor characterizes the "flow" of time, and a river is an appropriate special case of something that flows and that extends as far as the eye can see. Hence, a river is a common metaphor for the flow of time. The cows emerging from the river are individual entities (blocks of time -- in this case, years) emerging from the flow of time and moving past the observer; the ears of corn are also entities that come into the scene.

The second metaphor used is ACHIEVING A PURPOSE IS EATING, where being fat indicates success and being lean indicates failure. Examples include:

The league leaders **fattened up** on the last place team. He's **starved** for a win. I can **taste** victory. ...the sweet **smell** of success. He enjoyed the **fruits** of his labor. He's got **a lot on his plate.**

This metaphor is combined with the most common of metonymies: A PART STANDS FOR THE WHOLE, as in:

We need a strong **arm** in right field. We've got a good **glove** a third base. Look at his new **wheels**.

Since cows and corn were typical of meat and grain eaten, each single cow stands for all the cows raised in a year and each ear of corn for all the corn grown in a year. The fat cows and corn stand for food in general, which in turn metaphorically symbolizes success via ACHIEVING A PURPOSE IS EATING. The fat cows and corn also symbolize years, via TIME IS A MOVING OBJECT. Thus, they jointly symbolize good years.

The final metaphor used is: RESOURCES ARE FOOD, where using up resources is eating food. Examples include:

I've got a gas **guzzler**. They've **gobbled up** all the wood available to the building trades.

The devouring of the good years by the famine years is interpreted as indicating that all the surplus resources of the good years will be used up by the famine years. The interpretation of the both dreams is a composition of the same four parts: three conventional metaphors and one metonymy. The cow dream and the corn dream are both special cases of a single more general dream, where cows and corn are kinds of food.

What is of note here is that the analysis that I have given begins where Joseph's dream interpretation ends. The reason is that my analysis is an analysis of the interpretation, not of the dream. My purpose is to show why a given analysis of a dream makes sense to us. The answer is that metaphors and metonymies in our everyday conceptual system provide the link between the dream content and the interpretation.

Let us now return to analyses of dreams by people I know well.

### The Bridge Dream

A man I will call Herb fell in love and moved in with his girlfriend. Moving in turned out to be a disaster. They simply could not live together without fighting. With great sadness, they decided to split up. That night he dreamed that they started out on a trip from Berkeley, when a fierce storm blew up, and as they reached the Richmond-San Raphael Bridge (across San Francisco Bay), the bridge blew away into the bay.

This dream uses two common conventional metaphors. The first is the Emotional Climate metaphor, in which interior emotions are exterior weather conditions. Thus, a happy person has a sunny disposition, happiness is light, while sadness and depression are dark. A special case of this is that EMOTIONAL DISCORD IS A STORM. Via this metaphor, the storm symbolized the emotional discord of the fighting involved in the lovers' breakup.

The other metaphor involved is LOVE IS A JOURNEY. Setting out on the journey corresponds to the long-term commitment made by the lovers when they moved in together. The washing out of the bridge, which made it impossible to continue the journey, corresponds to the ending of the love relationship. Without the bridge the journey could not continue.

The washing out of the bridge has a second meaning via another common metaphor, in which RELATIONSHIPS ARE LINKS BETWEEN PEOPLE. Here the falling away of the bridge indicates the end of the relationship-link between the lovers.

## The Flying Dreams

A man I will call David always does things to extremes, whether working or having fun. He tries to live as joyous and fulfilling a life as possible. He works as a lawyer, primarily on cases that he believes in, and spends very long hours, often for months at a time wearing himself out. He is also a musician who likes to play far into the night, or go to late night concerts and party for long hours. He loves the outdoors, and will drive for many hours each way to go skiing for the weekend. He takes long vigorous walks and bike rides. He is generally happy, but when he exhausts himself, he gets gaunt and sick and depressed.

David has long had recurring dreams in which he was flying. In his early twenties, he would fly too high or fast or far in his dreams, and get terrified. Then he took a chance  and did something he had always wanted to do. He went to Paris, worked as a street singer, made a lot of friends and had a wonderful time. At this point he had a flying dream in which he flew especially high and fast, got scared, feared crashing, landed on the shoulders of a friend, did a back flip in the air and landed on his feet. Thereafter, his dreams of flying were pleasurable. He has been confident ever since that he would land on his feet.

The common metaphors involved are these:

•ACTION IS SELF-PROPELLED MOTION
•FREEDOM IS LACK OF CONSTRAINT.
•INTENSE ACTION IS FAST MOTION.

Flying, in this metaphor, is a form of fast motion with no constraints, but with the danger of falling and crashing, which signifies resulting harm. Metaphorically, flying is intense action with a sense of freedom -- what David prizes most. The flying dreams accompanied periods of such intense action in the service of freedom -- driving a taxicab in Boston after college, street singing in Paris, working as a lawyer for idealistic causes, putting together a band and making tapes and a video, going off on vigorous and exciting vacation trips.

In Paris, where he found the help of friends, the flying dream was extended by the metaphor of HELP IS SUPPORT -- he landed on a friend's shoulders. Then he did a backflip (a form of playful showing off) and landed on his feet (signifying a safe result). Indeed, we have the idiom "to land on one's feet" in English, which works by the same metaphors.

## The Classroom Dream

A woman I will call Karen dreamt that she was in the class of her favorite professor in college. He came over to her and said that she wasn't working and would fail the class.

Karen had recently married a professor who was a colleague of the professor in the dream. When she got married she quit a job she had hated and was not then working. She feared that her not working would lead to financial pressures that would cause the marriage to fail.

The metaphorical mechanism that links the dream and the knowledge to an interpretation is called the GENERIC IS SPECIFIC metaphor schema. It is a schema by which a general situation is understood in terms of one specific situation. Thus a General Case is understood in terms of what we will call Special Case 1. Because the General Case covers other special cases, another special case, call it Special Case 2, can also be understood in terms of Special Case 1. The result is a metaphorical analogy between Special Case 1 and Special Case 2.

Special Case 1 in the dream is a positive relationship with a professor in a course. The General Case is a positive relationship with a professor. Special Case 2 is a positive relationship with a professor in her marriage. The metaphorical analogy sets up a metaphorical correspondence:

-Karen's favorite professor in the dream is her current favorite professor -- her husband.

-Working to assure success in class is working to assure success in the marriage.

-Failing in the class is failing in the marriage.

The dream expresses Karen's fear that her marriage will fail because she quit her job.

### The Time Bomb Dream

A woman I will call Eileen dreamt that she was observing a mule having brain surgery. The mule's head was cut open and a time bomb was placed inside. The mule was then stitched up and ran off, becoming a beautiful, graceful horse. Eileen watches in terror as the horse prances gracefully with a time bomb in its head.

To comprehend this dream, the following information is necessary.

•Our cultural stereotype of the mule is that it is (1) stubborn, (2) sterile and (3) clumsy by comparison with a horse.

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•Eileen is in love with a man that she wants to marry. She has a grown child by a former marriage, and at her age, with her biological clock ticking, she is not likely to have any children in her second marriage. This upsets her.

•She is also very determined about how she wants to live her life. She wants to pursue a particular career, and at her point in life she feels the clock is running out on her. She will have to start soon.

•Moreover, the way she had always assumed she would pursue a career conflicts with her plans for marriage. Indeed, a number of her plans and desires conflict with the marriage that she very much wants. Thus she is pursuing inconsistent desires.

•Eileen is a worrier and has a history of panic attacks. For some years she was on medication to prevent such attacks, but had been off the medicine for several months at the time of the dream. Just before the dream, she had a panic attack and wound up in an argument with her prospective husband about her conflicting desires. She fears further panic attacks.

•Eileen went into therapy four years before the dream, at a time when she was barely functioning because of the panic attacks. When she went into therapy she had just broken off a damaging long-term relationship, and had difficulty dealing with men, as well as functioning professionally. Through therapy, she reached a point where she could function well again. She established a good relationship with the man she wants to marry and was able to return to her professional goals.

•Eileen is also a former dancer, who takes joy in physical activity, especially in her regular aerobics class. She counts on physical activity to keep her healthy and stable. And her  excellent physical shape makes her constantly aware that she is still capable of having children.

The mechanisms relating Eileen's dream to her life are the Great Chain of Being Metaphor Schema (Lakoff and Turner, 1989) and one of the major metaphors for ideas -- IDEAS ARE OBJECTS IN THE MIND.

According to the IDEAS ARE OBJECTS metaphor, ideas move in the direction of their consequences. Thus, following an idea entails being led to its consequences. Ideas with inconsistent consequences, are thus moving in opposite directions. They exert force on each other, and are thus seen as in conflict.

The Great Chain metaphor schema makes use of a folk version of the Great Chain of Being, in which there is a hierarchy of beings, with humans at the top, higher animals below them, and lower animals, plants, and inanimate objects further down.  The metaphor schema is a mechanism by which human behavior is understood in terms of the behavior of forms of being lower on the

chain. The metaphor works by metaphorically attributing to humans the distinguishing properties of beings lower on the chain. The being lower on the Great Chain is the mule; its distinguishing properties are stubbornness, sterility, and clumsiness (relative to horses).

Eileen was metaphorically a mule before therapy (an operation on her head), which enabled her to function well, to transform from a mule to a gracefully prancing horse. But she retains the inherent properties of of a mule: stubbornness and sterility. She is stubborn about how she wants to live her life; sterile, in that she will not be having any children in her future marriage. The conflicting desires -- her desire for marriage and her career aspirations -- were restored to her through therapy, the operation on her head. But the desires conflict -- they exert force on one another inside her head, and have a potential to metaphorically explode. They constitute the time bomb in her head. The time bomb also symbolizes her biological clock and her career clock, and the possibility of explosion symbolizes the destruction of her hopes of having more children and of pursuing a career. The possible return of panic attacks symbolizes another kind of metaphorical explosion. Meanwhile, in joyful physical activity, functioning in a good relationship and pursuing her career, she is the graceful horse -- with a time bomb in her head!

The Puzzle Dream

A woman I will call Jane dreamt that she was invited to the home of an older Jewish couple of her acquaintance who welcomed her warmly. After a while she went into an adjoining room and, with her younger sister, began pulling pieces of a puzzle out of a plastic sheet and assembling them. The pieces were in the form of cups and saucers and kitchen utensils. Then she went into the kitchen with the older Jewish couple, and her sister went in the other direction and out of the dream.

Jane is half-Catholic and half-Jewish. Her Jewish father had converted to Catholicism and she was raised Catholic. She did not have a happy childhood; her parents were distant from her and had little understanding of her or sympathy for her. She felt her parents never accepted her. Jane has always wanted her parents to be understanding and supportive. She believes, from cases she has observed, that Jewish parents are more understanding and supportive of their children than Catholic parents.

Jane rejected the church in her late teens. Her younger sister however became a whole-hearted Catholic: She is active in the church, she married a Catholic man, and she is raising her children in Catholic schools. Jane has always felt confused about her ethnic identity. She has recently gotten involved with a Jewish man who she is serious about marrying, and she has begun to experience the part of her that is Jewish in a positive way. She is still sorting out her ethnic identity. She is also trying to sort out her relationship to her sister.

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In the dream, the older Jewish couple symbolizes an alternative set of parents with the other half of her ethnicity -- accepting Jewish parents, rather than critical Catholic parents. She has regressed to childhood, playing with toys with her sister. She is putting together the pieces of the puzzle of her identity. The pieces are cups and saucers and other kitchen utensils, which stand metonymically for the home. In going into the kitchen with the older Jewish couple, she is choosing a Jewish home. Her sister goes in the other direction, choosing a Catholic home.

The mechanisms of this dream interpretation are (1) the GENERIC IS SPECIFIC metaphor schema, (2) the PROBLEMS ARE PUZZLES metaphor, (3) the INSTRUMENTS STAND FOR ACTIVITY metonymy, and (4) the metaphor CHOOSING SOMETHING IS GOING TO IT.

The GENERIC IS SPECIFIC analysis works like this:

First specific case: the older couple
General case: Older couples
Second specific case: Jane's parents

Analogy: Jane's parents are the older couple.

Since the older couple are Jewish and accepting of Jane, they represent parents who are Jewish and accepting of Jane.

In the dream, Jane is putting together the pieces of the puzzle. By the PROBLEMS ARE PUZZLES metaphor, she is trying to solve a problem. The puzzle pieces are domestic implements -- cups and saucers and kitchen utensils. By the INSTRUMENTS FOR ACTIVITY metonymy, domestic implements stand for domestic life in general. In her life, she is obsessed with the problem of figuring out her identity as someone whose homelife growing up failed her and who has rejected her parents' religion. Putting together the pieces of the homelife puzzle corresponds to working out this consuming problem.

The final metaphor at work her is CHOOSING SOMETHING IS GOING TO IT; REJECTING SOMETHING IS MOVING AWAY FROM IT, as in expressions like:

I'll **go for** the Honda. He almost bought that house, but then he **backed off.** I wouldn't **touch it with a ten-foot pole.**

Jane's going into the room with the older Jewish couple symbolizes the choice of a Jewish domestic life, life with her prospective husband. Her sister's going in the opposite direction symbolizes her sister's choice of a Catholic family life.

Conclusion

It should be clear by now that our everyday metaphor system shapes our dreams, allowing for the expression in another (perhaps "safer") form of our deepest difficutlies and anxieties.

Conventional metaphors have the potential to link concrete imagery, especially visual imagery, to more abstract concepts. Since the metaphor system is a fixed part of our unconscious system of concepts, conventional metaphors are always available to link concrete imagery to abstract meanings. And given abstract meanings, the metaphor system can constrain the choice of concrete imagery appropriate to express those meanings. As a result, the concerns of everyday life can be expressed via concrete imagery plus metaphors. Our system of conceptual metaphor makes it possible to express desires, fears, and descriptions of emotionally charged situations.

The metaphor system of English is now being studied systematically and scientifically. The result is a kind of dictionary of unconscious thought. In general, the metaphor system sgared by members of a culture can be thought of as having two parts: The everyday conventional metaphors, which, though unconscious, have reflexes in everyday language; and the tabooed metaphors, which, because of their tabooed nature, are not expressed in conventional language. Freud, because of his concern with sexuality and repression, was largely concerned with tabooed metaphors. I, because I am a linguist by profession, am largely concerned with the everyday metaphors that show up in ordinary language.

Because dream interpretation has largely be done by psychotherapists, the kinds of analyses I have discussed, though certainly noticed, have never been the subject of systematic and rigorous study. But now that linguistics and cognitive science have yielded an understanding of our everyday metaphor systems, it has become possible to apply that knowledge to dream interpretation in a systematic way.

The everyday, nontabooed metaphors are every bit as important to the understanding of dreams as the tabooed ones. Some therapists have an instinctive understanding of how our everyday metaphor system operates in dreams. But many do not. When I read books on dream analysis by psychotherapists, I rarely find much attention given over to those aspects of the meanings of dreams that depend on the everyday metaphor system.

The metaphor system is far from obvious. Those who want to make use of it in dream interpretation should probably get some training in how the system works. After all, if you are using the language of the unconscious, it might be useful to get a few grammar lessons and have a dictionary handy.

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I would like to conclude by discussing what I am not claiming. I am not, for example, promoting a new form of dream therapy. I am certainly not claiming that metaphor analysis replaces other forms of dream work in therapy. The metaphor system will inevitably be used in any form of dream work, simply because we use that system whenever we think. But the metaphor system does not determine what form the dream work should take. For example, Fritz Perls introduced into gestalt therapy the technique of having the dreamer take on the role of every person and thing in the dream. In doing so, dreamers will almost without exception make some use or other of their everyday metaphor systems, but the power of the therapeutic technique is not in the use of the metaphor system per se. As with poetry in a foreign language, you will need to use a dictionary, but the poetry is far more than what is in the dictionary.

Although this chapter has been about dreams, it should be clear that metaphor analysis should be useful in every aspect of psychotherapy. People can believe their metaphors and live according to them. Moreover, early childhood experience can serve as a metaphorical source for adult life, as Freud observed. Systematic training in metaphor analysis would, I believe, be enormously useful as part of the training of any psychotherapist.

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