Dreams
The Mystery of our Dreaming World
What are Dreams?

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Dreams have held enormous fascination for humankind throughout the centuries

- They have changed the course of human destiny many times
- They have influenced all the major religions
- They probably instigated humankind's quest for spiritual knowledge
Have you ever wondered about YOUR dreams?

What do they mean?

Why have them?
Let’s look at what others think our dreams mean by taking a walk through the past.

From Ancient Egypt to modern dream researchers.
Dreams

Historical background
Egyptian Beliefs

- Interpreted dreams as messages from the gods.
- Serapis was the god of dreams & Incubation Temples were dedicated to him - the one at Memphis built c3000BC
- Dream interpreters were known as the Learned men of the Magic Library
- Stele inscriptions
- Chester Beatty papyrus (c2000BC) lists good & bad dreams, with interpretations
Indian Beliefs

- Vedas (sacred books of wisdom) written c1500BC includes dream interpretations
- Also contains speculations about dreams at certain times of night - e.g. 1st sleep period dreams would not come true for a year, dreams before waking were already half realised
- Upanishads (900BC) suggest dream images are from the dreamer but also suggests the soul leaves the body during sleep
Greek Beliefs

- Earliest references are in Homer - dreams associated with important turning points in lives of the heroes.
- In the *Iliad*, Zeus is the god who sends dreams to men. In the *Odyssey*, Athene sends dreams to women.
- The Greek tragedies contain many dreams and interpretations.
- Freud immortalised the drama by Sophocles - *Oedipus Rex*.
- Dream Temples dedicated to Aesculapius were used for incubating healing dreams.
Chinese Beliefs

- Sophisticated philosophy: material soul $p'o$, spiritual soul, $hun$
- The $hun$ was involved in dreaming – leaving the body each night to roam in the realms of the dead
- *Chou Kung’s Book of Auspicious and Inauspicious Dreams* 1020BC
- *Lie-tseu* is a Taoist work that defines several classes of dreams – compensatory
- Dream incubation widely practised

"Last night I dreamed I was a butterfly, flitting around in the sky; then I awoke. Now I wonder: Am I a man who dreamt of being a butterfly, or am I a butterfly dreaming that I am a man?"
- Chuang Tzu 389-286 BC
Hebrew Beliefs

- Jacob’s ladder to heaven
- Daniel gained political power by interpreting Nebuchadnezzar’s dreams
- As did Joseph in Egypt
- Angels were God’s messengers
- The Talmud contains 217 references to dreams – many causes: physical, emotional, spiritual
- “An uninterpreted dream is like an unread letter”

“For God speaketh once, yea twice, yet man perceiveth it not. In a dream, in a vision of the night when deep sleep falleth upon men slumbering upon their bed, then He openeth their ears and sealeth in their instructions.” - Job 33: 14–16
Roman Beliefs

- Influenced by the Greeks
- Dream incubation shrines
- Roman Orator Cicero was cynical about dream interpretation – so many meanings

"..... On whatever subject we have much previously dealt, ........, during sleep we, for the most part, fancy that we are engaged in the same". - Lucretius 98-55 B.C.
Artemidorus of Daldis

- Born in Greece in 2nd century AD
- Dreams are a continuation of waking experiences
- Wrote a series of five books, The Oneirocritica
- Significant influence up until dawn of modern psychology

"Dreams and visions are infused into men for their advantage and instruction".
Hippocrates

- 469 – 399 BC
  contemporary of Socrates
- Some dreams divinely inspired
- But most the result of sensations in the body
- Useful in the diagnosis and treatment of disease as humoral imbalances could be detected

“All the objects we believe to see indicate a wish of the soul”. 
Plato

- 427 – 347 BC
- Interested in emotional implications of dreams
- Reasoning suspended in sleep and so desire and anger reveal themselves

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Aristotle

- Plato’s student 384 – 322 BC
- Dreams are the result of physical stimuli
- Like Hippocrates, he believed dreams could be prodromal
- Suggested prophetic dreams were simply result of cause and effect

"The most skilled interpreter of dreams is he who has the faculty of observing resemblances"
New Testament

- Joseph
- The three wise men
- Pilate’s wife

“Have nothing to do with that just man for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of him.” (Matthew 27:19).
Galen

- Greek Physician born around 130 A.D.
- Trained at a medical school attached to a shrine of Aesculpius – it was a dream that caused a change from studying philosophy
- Like Hippocrates, he believed dreams could be prodromal
- Dream interpretation difficult because some are waking memories and some are prophetic
- Carried out operations on basis of guidance received in dreams

“It is necessary to observe dreams accurately both as to what is seen and what is done in sleep in order that you may prognosticate and heal satisfactorily”
St. Jerome

- St. Jerome (4th century A.D.) correctly translated the Hebrew word *anan* (witchcraft) in the Bible except for three occurrences when he translated the word into *observo somnia* (observing dreams)
- This changed Christian belief and within two centuries the Church decreed dreams were the Devil’s work
- Resulted in the stifling of creative pursuits for centuries

In the West, this mistrust of dreams has more or less remained
Macrobius

- Contemporary of Jerome
- Wrote about nightmares (*insomnium*) and apparitions (*phantasma*)
- Formulated the concept of *incubus* and *succubus* - seductive demons
- His published Commentary became very influential – the most well-known dream book in medieval Europe and added substantially to the paranoia about evil spirits that became the hallmark of the Dark Ages
Thomas Aquinas

Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274), wrote extensively on the prophetic nature of dreams, influenced greatly by Aristotle’s work.

- Attempted to explain dreams rationally, (prompted by waking experiences or physical sensations),
- And also in terms of moral philosophy; some dreams are sent by God (but only to the clergy)
- Most are sent by the devil.
The Dark Ages

- And so Demons and Devils became an obsession for Western Christians
- A link was made between Lucifer and sexual perversity in dreams
- It became a sin to believe in dreams
- And so dreaming became a very hazardous nocturnal activity which could never be discussed openly
17th / 18th century

- Philosophers were becoming scientists
- Royal Society founded in 1645
- Knowledge to be acquired only by experimental investigation
- Reductionism became popular
- Dreams (like witchcraft) were assigned to the realms of superstition
- But many artists (and some scientists) still believed

Robert Boyle – one of the founders of the Royal Society
The new science of Psychology
By now it was realised that man had a mind and that this could not be explained in terms of biology.

Carl Carus published *Psyche* in 1846.

Consciousness arose gradually in life but always under the influence of the unconscious.

3 kinds of dreams
- Mineral
- Vegetal
- Animal
Frank Seafield – a neglected voice

- Real name: Alexander Grant
- Published comprehensive review on dreams in 1865
- Concluded, "In somnio veritas" "Truth is in Sleep"

He recognised:
- Dreams have intelligible meaning
- Content is related to dreamer’s personality and thoughts & emotions of previous day
- Some dreams are prodromal
- The dreaming mind is capable of problem solving
- Dreams can be compensatory
- Introspection about one’s dreams can lead to valuable insight to achieve a better balanced personality
20th Century - Sigmund Freud

- 1856 – 1939
- The interpretation of dreams (1900)
- Manifest & latent dream content
- Wish fulfilment
- Closely linked to libido
- Ego, super ego and id
- Dreams conceal forbidden desires
- Free association of ideas
Carl Jung

- 1875 – 1961
- Freud’s protégé
- Alchemy, myths and legends
- Cultural similarities
- Spiritual nature
- Conscious, subconscious and collective unconscious
- Anima, animus, shadow
- Symbolism important
- Dreams elucidate and express the truth
1870 – 1937.

Dreams are emotional rehearsals where we practice modes of behaviour that will increase our power and self-worth.

Dreams identify and overcome those character traits that prevent us from being who we really want to be.
Other voices

- Rational explanation for precognitive dreams proposed by John W. Dunne in the 1920’s.

- And some not so rational e.g. Edgar Cayce.
Dream Research Today
J. Allan Hobson

- Theory of activation synthesis
- Do the best we can with whatever comes along
- Agrees that dreams are relevant to life of dreamer but does not recognise that analysing them serves any purpose
Ernest Hartmann

- Dreams are the result of a chemical balancing act in the brain.
- In waking consciousness, feed forward nets operate.
- In dreams auto-associative nets occur.
Stephen LaBerge

- Leading name in lucid dreaming
- Has shown that self-reflection is not always absent in dreaming
- Feels that current neurochemical models are over-simplified
Calvin S. Hall

- Developed a cognitive theory of dreams which states that dreams express "conceptions" of self, family members, friends, and social environment.
- Developed a quantitative coding system with Bob Van De Castle for dream content (1966) that is still used today.
Montague Ullman

- Developed a unique technique to use in groupwork.
- If this were my dream . . . . .
Robert Van De Castle

- Co-authored *Content Analysis of Dreams* with Calvin Hall in 1966
- Wrote *Our Dreaming Mind* in 1994 – source of most of the material in this presentation
- Currently researching the appearance and meaning of “angels” in dreams
Robert Hoss

- Built on techniques used in Gestalt therapy
- Has researched our instinctive, emotional response to colour
- Has proposed Image Activation Dreamwork which includes completion of Colour Questionnaire, as a way of working with dreams
George Lakoff

- A linguist & politician
- Believes that metaphor underpins all language, culture and thought processes; including dreams
- Metaphor is how we conceptualise the world
Robert Moss

- Active dreaming
- Synthesis of dreamwork and shamanic techniques
- Lightning Dreamwork
The International Association for the Study of Dreams (IASD)

- A global community of dream workers
- A non-profit, international, multidisciplinary organization dedicated to the pure and applied investigation of dreams and dreaming.
- Mission is to promote an awareness and appreciation of dreams in both professional and public arenas; to encourage research into the nature, function and significance of dreaming; to advance the application of the study of dreams; and to provide a forum for the eclectic and interdisciplinary exchange of ideas and information.
- All members abide by the IASD Ethical guidelines
- www.asdreams.org
So, what are dreams?

- Are they caused by random firings of brain stem?
- Do we dream in order to forget?
- How are neural networks implicated?
- Is dreaming a survival strategy?
- Do we dream to learn?
- Are dreams the language of the unconscious?
- Are they messages from God?
- Can we access alternate realities when we dream?
Whatever you believe . . .

- Dreams are a psychic reality
- They can be used as a powerful pathway to self-knowledge
- They can provide direct access to the psyche
- Many people use them to solve problems
These are the facts . . .

- Dreams are a natural functioning of mind
- Metaphor abounds; language and concepts are translated literally
- There is overwhelming evidence that dreams reflect the current situation of the dreamer
- “Sleep on it” has been scientifically proven to be sound advice for solving problems
- In an average lifetime, we spend 25 years asleep and 8 years dreaming
Questions currently being debated by the scientific community

- How are dreams formed?
- Do they have a function; If so, what is it?
- Is it useful to analyse them?
- If so, how should this analysis be approached?
What do you think your dreams mean?
If you’re not sure (and even if you think you are!) why not find out more?

ISBN 1-4120-5546-6

Order your copy today
Thank you for watching.

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