Return of The Repressed:
The Social Structure of Dreams

Contribution to a Social Oneirology

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Return of The Repressed: The Social Structure of Dreams. Whereas the correspondence between mental and social structures have been a central theme in sociology, few sociologists have shown any interest in the phenomena of dreams – in great contrast to the neighbouring disciplines of anthropology and psychology. Reviewing how the presence and content of dreams have been explained in antiquity and modern times, it is argued that typical dreams offer a potential fruitful subject for a sociology of dreams. Surveying 266 students for their social characteristics and their remembrance of forty typical dreams, the statistical analysis identifies links between social position and students' varying dreaming of power and powerlessness, and also between more symbolic and concrete dreams. The result is an interesting parallell to Bourdieu's studies of aesthetic dispositions, suggesting that dreams are fundamentally a form of social practice and reflecting the general unity of practice.

> The dream does never trouble itself about things which are not deserving of our concern during the day.
>
> Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1913)

"For sociology, interested only in the man awake, the sleeper might as well be dead", says Roger Bastide (1966).[1] In contrast to anthropology, where studies of dreams have been important for the understanding of the myths of primitive societies ("much of the content of dreams tends to become articulated in myths, and myths, or parts of myths, are retold in dreams"[2]), dreams have in sociology been seen as something "not within the competence of a sociology worthy of its name" (Kuper 1979: 645). Whereas Emilie Durkheim, the father of modern sociology, was interested in the correspondence between mental and social structures (Durkheim & Mauss 1963), he revealed little interest in dreams, and his pupil, Maurice Halbwachs, in his studies of the social nature of memories concluded that the sphere of dreams, unlike all other forms of human experience, was fundamentally outside society, being "based only on itself" (Halbwachs 1992: 42-43, 171-173).

Praktiske Grunde. Nordisk tidsskrift for kultur- og samfundsvidenskab, nr. 3-4, 2017, 41-54
ISSN 1902-2271 www.praktiskegrunde.dk

A related imbalance between sociology and anthropology can be seen in their relation to the psychoanalytical movement: whereas major figures of anthropology took a great interest in psychoanalytic theory and tried applying its insights to the study of societies (e.g. Malinowski 2001), the tradition had little influence on sociological theory (Billig 1993). An important exception is here the work of The Frankfurt School, where several, like Herbert Marcuse in *Eros and Civilization* (1955), used ideas from psychoanalysis not for curing individual sickness, but for diagnosing the general disorder and repressive tendencies of modern Western societies. Of particular note in this context is the ideas, if not the actual synthesis, of Erich Fromm, who in the essay "Method and Function of an Analytical Social Psychology" (1932) forcefully argued for a reconciliation of historical materialism and psychoanalysis, with the aim to understand "the intellectual apparatus of a group, its libidinous and largely unconscious behaviour, in terms of its socio-economic structure." (Fromm 1932: 483).

The idea of a systematic link between social conditions and mental life were, of course, present already in the work of Karl Marx ("Consciousness can never be anything but conscious being, and man's being is his concrete life"; 1845: part I), and it has proved important in both psychological and sociological studies of social class, if not continuing the psychoanalytical tradition. In an extensive review of research on the psychology of class, Micheal Argyle (1994) for example suggests that "Middle-class people tend to be more inner-directed, and to have stronger achievement motivation, longer-term goals; working-class individuals tend to be more aggressive and authoritarian." (Argyle 1994: 290). In sociology, such generalisations are probably most famously discussed in the work of Pierre Bourdieu, who in *Distinction* (1984) combines analyses of the objective life conditions of various classes (given by their relative volume and distribution of various forms of capital) with penetrating analyses of their general social and cultural orientation, e.g. in the conformist character of the lower classes which he argues are rooted in their dominated status (Bourdieu 1984: 374). There appear thus in sociology a curious gap, where the idea of a relation between the social conditions and mental life of social groups are well established, but where the nocturnal part of our mental life appears outside its interest. The sociologist closes his eyes when his subject goes to sleep.

Why do we dream? Old dreams, big dreams

"Ragnhildi dróttningu dreymdi drauma stóra ...". Like many Norwegians, my first introduction to reading old Norse was through the story of Ragnhild Sigurdsdotter in Heimskringla, who dreamt that a seed taken from her gown grew into a white tree overspreading the whole of the land, heralding the birth of Harald Fairhair, the first king of Norway. Ragnhild's husband Halfdan the Black, in contrast, never had any dreams, a circumstance he found so extraordinary that he consulted Thorleif Spake to find a remedy. His advice – to sleep in a sty – proved wise, and Halfdan dreamt he had long beautiful hair with many ringlets of various length –

where one ringlet surpassed all the others in beauty, lustre, and size. Thorleif interpreted the dream as one signalling a great number of heirs of various success, Snorre adding that "[i]t was the opinion of people that this [largest] ringlet betokened King Olaf the Saint".

Halfdan and Ragnhild's dreams are typical of one main theory that dominated most societies up to modern times, namely that dreams are supernatural messages, often sent by divine beings,[3] giving extraordinary insights about oneself, the world and the future. This view is, of course, also present in the religious texts of the dominant world religions (in the Bible there are more than seventy references to dreams, those of the Pharaoh being perhaps the most well known, and most of the Korean was revealed to Mohammad in his dreams). The allusive nature of dreams – and in some cultures, the added threat that the dreams may also be false and malevolent (the dark-winged oneiroi of Greek mythology were daimones who could provide both true and misleading dreams) gave need for the consulting of specialised interpreters to find their true meaning.[4]

Another way of explaining dreams can be seen in the Norwegian medieval ballad *Draumkvedet* (The Dream Lay), which tells of the dream of Olav Åsteson who falls asleep on Christmas Eve and awakens on the thirteenth day (the Epiphany). He rides to church, seats himself on the doorstep and starts recounting his visions: "I have travelled up to the heavens and down to the dyke full dark, both have I seen the flames of hell and of heaven likewise a part."[5] Like Dante's *Divina Commedia*, *Draumkvedet* tells of the final rewards of virtue and the punishment of sins (and like Dante, seeming to enjoy the punishment most). In contrast to the dreams of Ragnhild and Halfdan, Olav's dream is not presented as allegorical, but as an account of the actual wanderings of the soul during sleep. This idea of dreams as (often perilous) excursions into supernatural realms, where extraordinary insights and aid can be gained is often associated with shamans, the "technicians of the sacred" (Eliade 1964), but as made clear by this example, is not exclusive to shamanism.

These traditional understandings of dreams – as supernatural messages or as experiences of the wandering soul – have two important attributes (besides their supernatural nature). The first is their similarity to epiphanies and visions in waking life, e.g. the trances of the Greek Oracles and the visions of religious saints.[6] Their second feature is their enormous significance: they are "big dreams", or in Malinowski's words (2001: 77) they are "official dreams", dreams of great importance for the whole community (c.f. Dr. King's "I have a dream"). To these traditional beliefs there has emerged another theory, that dreams are the results of natural mental activity during sleep.[7] While it is tempting to term this the modern type of dream theory, this label should be used with caution. First, traditional views of dreams are still very present in Western societies, both in modern folklore (e.g. in the idea of "true dreams" and "out of body"-experiences), in all major world religions and in new-age culture (e.g. in the works of Carlos Castaneda). Second, many of the modern ideas of dreams can be found in Ancient Greece.

Heraclitus, 400 BC, saw dreams as resulting from natural processes in the body and of little significance. Aristotle likewise denied a supernatural origin, observing that animals also dream in their sleep (a fact which also poses a problem for Freud's theory), and agreed with Hippocrates that dreams reflect bodily changes (for the latter, dreaming of springs and rivers was simply a signal of the onset of urogenital problems). Aristotle also speculated that the similarities between hallucinations and dreams had a common origin, and suggested that the reduced sensory input while asleep contributed to their distorted nature – both views which are much in line with modern biological dream research. Notably, Socrates' views on dreams attributed by Plato in The Republic (IX) also anticipate Freud's view of the unconscious:[8] "In all of us, even in good men, there is a lawless wild-beast nature, which peers out in our sleep." (A feature of dreams which later intensely worried St. Augustine, who feared that God would hold him responsible for the content of his dreams).[9]

From private myths to chlolinergic hyperstimulation

While leaving aside supernatural explanations meant that dream research had to move from a cosmological scale to that of the profane and private realm, the bizarre nature and unintelligibility of dreams continued to fascinate scholars. While many clues to the unconscious were given through advances in medicine in the late 18th century (e.g. neurologists Jean-Marie Charcot and Pierre Janet's exploration of the hypnotic phenomena) and many of Sigmund Freud's central ideas of the mind were not original (the concept of Id, for example, can probably be traced back to Nietzsche's concept of "das Es" introduced in *Alzo Sprach Zarathustra* (1883-1885: ch. 4, part I). Freud's theory of dreams set forth in *Die Traumdeutung* (1899), however, had enormous impact and cannot be ignored by a sociology of dreams.

Freud's central idea was that dreams are fundamentally the hallucinatory fulfilment of a forbidden wish, and in order to not disturb the sleeper, had to be concealed by a process he termed dream work (*traumarbeit*). Repressed cravings for masturbation, for example, could through dream work take on the image of one's teeth falling out (Freud 1899), illustrating the techniques of representation (a thought is translated to an image – dreams are thus essentially a product of remediation), condensation (a complex of ideas is reduced to a single image), symbolisation (a disturbing image is substituted by a more neutral one) and displacement (the image is replaced by a related, but less threatening image).

To unravel this nightly rebus, Freud famously introduced a specific interview technique, where free association of the dreamer would lead the analyst from the dream to its original impulse. Carl Gustav Jung famously fell out with Freud over the question of the importance of sexuality, seeing the dream instead as natural expressions of universal psychic characteristics common to all humans (which he first termed primordial images and later archetypes) and fulfilling a compensatory function by bringing to attention the shortcomings and imbalances in the dream-

er's life, providing "a spontaneous self-portrayal, in symbolic form, of the actual situation in the unconscious" (cited in Stevens 1995: 66). Thus, whereas dreams for Freud gave insight into the infantile cravings and fears, the dream for Jung also informed us of "ineluctable truths, philosophical pronouncements, illusions, wild fantasies, memories, plans, anticipations, irrational experiences, even telepathic visions, and heaven knows what besides" (cited in Stevens 1995: 66).

Modern biological research has not been kind to the psychoanalytic tradition. In the view of J. Allen Hobson (2002), both Freud and Jung represent a continuity with the traditional speculation on the divine nature of dreams,[10] and many of their ideas appear erroneous in light of advances in brain biology. E.g. whereas the incoherent and confused nature of the dream for Freud was a disguise of unacceptable wishes, the activation-synthesis model convincingly explains this as an outcome of inactivation of various parts of the brain in its sleep state. Delusional beliefs in dreams are in the same model not "primary processes", but an effect of the loss of working memory from inactivation of the Dorsolateral prefrontal cortex, and strong emotions in dreams are explained as "cholinergic hyperstimulation of amygdala and related temporal lobe structures" (Hobson 2002: 16-25). And so forth. Strikingly, whereas Freud and Jung focused on the dream content, modern biological research see this of secondary interest to its form.

Compromising these views, psychiatrist Anthony Stevens says that we have reached the point in the history of oneirology (the study of dreams) where it is simply not good enough to discuss dreams as if they were purely psychological or entirely neurophysiological phenomena – they clearly are both (Stevens 1995: 3). Even so, one might wonder if our understanding of dreams could not also gain something by also considering them as social phenomena. For this argument an empirical exercise is in order.

On method

I agree with Griffith et al. (Griffith, Myiyagi & Tago 1958: 1173) that rather than unique dreams, the typical dreams appear as the most fruitful object for the sociologist. Whereas unique dreams may appear only once in a lifetime, typical dreams (flying, being nude in public, finding money etc.) are repeated and common for many of us, and their status as social facts in Durkheim's sense is also reinforced by the fact that such common nightly narratives and images are largely outside the explanatory realm of biologically informed dream research (Hobson 2002) and, intriguingly, have also proven troublesome for psychoanalysis, as Freud himself admitted his lack of success in identifying their origin using the technique of free association (Freud 1899: V).

As a modest experiment to study the relation between social conditions and dream content, I in 2004 and 2006 asked bachelor students from Volda University College to participate anonymously in a short web survey of their dreams. They were not given any particular briefing beforehand, being told simply that it was a methodological experiment. 266 responded, a response rate of 79%.[11] The ques-

tionnaire included ten questions: gender, five indicators on social background (fathers income, type and length of education, political office and interest in four art forms), and four general questions on their dreams, including types of dreams ("Have you ever dreamt of ...", 40 categories, where 34 were borrowed from a comparative study of American and Japanese college students in 1958 (Griffith et al. 1958), their general logical consistency (from Domhoff 1962), how often they remembered their dreams, and the general possibility that their dreams could have happened in real life (from Goldenberg 1963).

Such a sociological survey of dreams offers an exemplary methodological case as it combines, in a condensed form, many of the common problems for a survey enquiry: the fickleness of memory (everyone dreams, but who remembers them? Are some types of dreams more easily remembered? Or even worse, are some types of dreams more easily recalled by some social groups?), different willingness to disclose private information (like dreaming of sex), lack of relevant categories (if any students were dreaming of seven fat and seven thin cows, we will never know), the problems of simple classification of complex phenomena (would two persons having the same dream assign it to different categories?) and so forth. At the same time, whereas the reduction of complex dreams to simple "types" in a questionnaire is in one way not more problematic than asking people if they enjoy "modern classical music" rather than "the Leningrad Symphony", Freud's insistence on the generally loose connection between the dream image and its important elements[12] adds to the pile of methodological worries.[13]

Culture dreams

The order of regularity of the different types of dreams tend to be roughly similar among the Norwegian students in 2004/6 and the American students in 1958. For example, dreams of falling, school, being attacked or pursued and sexual experiences are among the most common types in both groups. The main differences appear to follow obvious cultural and national differences. For example, that dreams of a sexual nature and nudity are more common among the Norwegian students (and with smaller differences between the sexes) seems plausible to interpret as reflecting different attitudes to sex and differences in gender socialisation. Likewise, the greater "popularity" of many dreams in USA in 1958 can probably be attributed to obvious differences, e.g. in material conditions (dreams of eating delicious food or finding money), fauna (snakes) and penal systems (being hanged). The fact that many dream types appear more common in USA in 1958, in particular those related to intense feelings of helplessness and impotence (being smothered, tied up, locked up, being dead e.t.c.) suggests several explanations, but our main concern here is that the data suggest a cultural and national character of dreams which cannot easily be explained as due to natural differences in brain biology, making them a viable sociological object (c.f. the argument for a sociological study of suicide by Durkheim 1979). More detailed comparisons are probably best not made, as the lack of precise information on the sampling and

survey situation of the American students makes it difficult to assess the comparability of the samples.

Table 1. Distribution of some typical dreams.
Norwegian students 2004/6 and American students 1958. Percentages.

	NORWAY 2004/06			USA 1958		
DREAM	MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL*	MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL*
HAVE YOU EVER DREAMED OF? (N=250)	....	(N=97)	(N=168)	(N=266)	(N=134)	(N=116)
sexual experiences	95	79	87	93	36	64
being attacked or pursued	80	85	83	77	78	77
falling	68	70	69	80	85	83
loved person to be dead	54	73	64	49	67	58
school, teachers, studying	56	60	58	60	84	72
flying or soaring through air	64	48	56	32	35	34
falling with fear	53	59	56	62	73	68
arriving too late	54	56	55	60	67	64
being nude	60	48	54	48	37	42
trying again and again to do something	49	46	48	68	75	71
lose an important object#	52	42	47			
being on the verge of falling	38	54	46	52	41	46
being frozen with fright	37	38	38	53	64	58
eating delicious food	34	26	30	57	67	62
wild, violent beasts	32	27	30	33	27	30
dead people as though alive	21	38	30	40	53	47
killing someone	34	24	29	38	11	25
being inappropriately dressed	25	29	27	39	54	47
swimming	21	32	27	47	58	52
your teeth falling out	18	29	24	13	30	21
get suddenly rich, e.g. by Lotto#	27	20	24			
fire	23	23	23	33	50	41
failing an examination	13	29	21	34	44	39
having superior knowledge or mental ability	25	16	21	28	23	25
falling without fear	23	18	21	33	34	33
lunatics or insane people	16	24	20	22	29	26
finding money	25	8	17	61	50	56
being locked up	12	21	17	55	58	57
being tied, unable to move	9	20	15	28	34	31
being smothered, unable to breathe	12	17	15	42	47	45
snakes	9	20	15	43	55	49
having superior artistic abilities#	20	6	13			
seing self as dead	8	15	12	33	34	33
seeing oneself in mirror	5	14	10	8	17	13
creatures, part animal, part human	10	8	9	19	10	15
being buried alive	8	9	9	15	15	15
being hanged by neck	0	1	1	5	1	3

* = adjusted for gender. ✣ = only Norwegian students.
The statistics for the American students are from Griffith, Myiyagi & Tago (1958).

The space of dreams

Given a research object as ambiguous as dreams, we should first focus on the formal, statistical differences in the data, in this case using multiple correspondence analysis: What kinds of dreams tend to be linked? Are there important instances of dreams which are commonly dreamed by some groups but not by others? Furthermore, are such differences systematically linked to the dreamers' so-

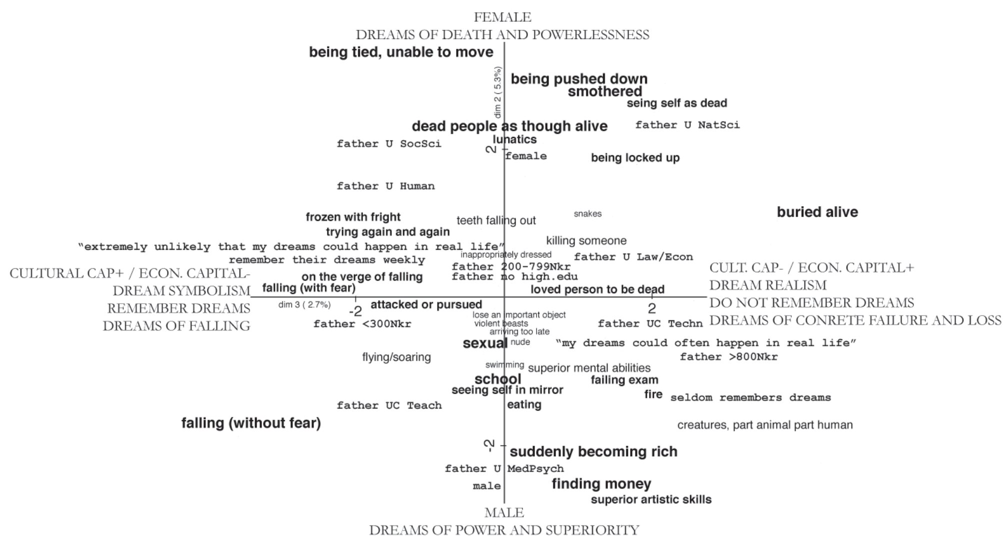
cial characteristics (father's class and the respondents' gender), and other characteristics of their dream life?

The statistically most important difference in the students' responses to the list of 35 dreams, is that some say they remember having many of these dreams and some fewer, and this general propensity constitutes the first axis of difference. This is not shown in figure 1, as it is not very important: while it may suggest a form of dream omnivourism it might just as likely express the bias necessary present in any simple list of complex phenomena, and while this tendency is linked to the general frequency of dream recall, it is not linked to any other observable characteristics.

The second axis, and the first one of analytical importance (top-down in figure 1) first and foremost opposes those who – more often – say that they remember dreams of extreme situations of being helpless and powerless (being tied and unable to move, being pushed down, smothered, being dead etc.) contra those who more often recall dreams of power and superiority (becoming suddenly rich, finding money, having superior artistic or mental abilities). The former are also more likely to have dreams involving dead people, and the latter to dream of flying or falling without fear, school and dreams of a sexual nature. In general, this axis opposes female and male students.

The third axis is more ambiguous. At one hand (left in the map) it is linked to dreams involving flying or falling, the latter which might be both joyful and fearful experiences, and also dreams involving frustration over the inability to do something (trying again and again), being immobilised (frozen with fear) or being attacked/pursued. These students are opposed to those (on the right side) whose dreams appear to be characterised by their concreteness and finality – total powerlessness (being dead, locked in, buried alive), and definite, realistic fears (the death of loved ones, failing exams, fire). This axis is clearly linked to differences in class backgrounds: the "falling" dreams are more common among students whose fathers have educations suggesting a higher than average cultural capital (university educations in humanistic or social disciplines, or being teachers) to those with fathers whose educations are from the natural sciences, or of a technical or economic nature and higher economic capital. The axis is not linked to father's educational level, suggesting that it is primarily linked to capital composition, not capital volume (Bourdieu 1984: 176).[14] The same opposition is also linked to differences in dream recall (the "fallers" say they remember their dreams more often) and dream realism (fewer of them agree that their dreams could, even with some modification, have happened in their real life).

Figure 1. The space of dreams. Students 2004/6, axis 2-3.[15]



The formal patterns – the free statistical associations between having different types of dreams, the social characteristics of the respondent and their recollection of their general propensity to remember their dreams and their probability to happen in real life – are quite easy to establish. An interpretation of these patterns, however, appear to extremely easily lead to an endless series of ad hoc hypotheses, if only because, as Gaston Bachelard said of the flame as a scientific object, that it's initial charm "... is so strong that it still has the power to warp the minds of the clearest thinkers and to keep bringing them back to the poetic fold in which dreams replace thought" (1964: 2). The most general problem – besides the fundamental ambiguity of the dream categories (e.g. some might dream of killing someone by accident, other by purpose, it might be linked to intense feelings of grief or sadistic satisfaction, the victim might be faceless or a spouse, the dream may recur often or only once etc.) – is related to the dream as an expression of a state or its negation, and it's effectiveness in disguising it's origins.

For an empirically minded sociologist, this appears as an excellent place to end the essay, quote Wittgenstein ("Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent"), and get out of here, leaving the dream of a sociology of dreams to rest. Alas, we cannot be satisfied with a formal description of such differences, and we must move into the interpretative realm of dreams, even if we, by this, risk becoming dreamers ourselves.

Return of the repressed

A starting point for our interpretation – in light of the statistical patterns we have unveiled – is to follow Freud's argument for the dream as wish fulfilment. This idea appear easily applicable for the less privileged male students, whose dreams

of being rich and powerful appear as a relatively straightforward fulfilment of (sexual) wishes. But how can we then explain that female students more often dream of being utterly helpless, in the power of others (being tied, pushed down, smothered)? Interestingly, for Freud, this can also be wish-fulfilment: it might be the fulfilment of a repressed wish following straightforward infantile-sexual ideas, or a wish for self-punishment (what Freud termed a "punishment dream") for other repressed cravings, or even the fulfilment of a repressed fear. In the last cases the painful aspects of the dreams can be balanced by the immense gratification of articulating the repressed (Freud 1899: VII-C). This explanation is, of course, marred by being unfalsiable. If it was the other way around – that women more often dreamt of being powerful, we would just reverse the explanation and see it as a form of wish fulfilment. Why female students systematically dream more often of being powerless, and not powerful, however, appear unexplainable by Freud.

In a Jungian interpretation, in contrast, the female students' dreams of being tied might be seen not as wish fulfilment, but as an allegory which bring to self-attention a general lack of freedom in their lives. It is not difficult to bring this idea to a sociological level, and interpret the females' dream profile as expressing fundamental social structures where they are in a dominated position, and their dreams of being violated, rather than a wish-fulfilment, as a (sub)conscious recognition of this position, where their nightly violation echoes the daily symbolic violence they are subject to.

Several similar suggestions of a social isomorphism between various types of dreams and the social (class) origins of the student can be seen in figure 1. First, students from the most culturally privileged backgrounds, and in particular the male students from these classes – who thus combine a double dominant position and are furthest from social necessity – are also the most prone to report of pleasurable dreams of flying, bringing to mind Bourdieu's description of the new petite-bourgeoisie as having "a dream of social flying" and wishing to "defy the gravity of the social field" (Bourdieu 1984: 370). The fact that the less culturally privileged (and, in particular, the female) students are, by contrast, prone to dream of being locked up, being smothered, or even – as a final defeat – seeing themselves as dead or buried alive, can by a similar logic be seen as powerful expressions of a dominated position (noting that women and working-class members are those who generally feel strongest the calls for conformity and loyalty to the group), and echoing the fact that distribution of symbolic capital, and thus of one's social importance, is also a distribution of reasons of living (Bourdieu 2000: 241).

Also of note is that whereas students rich in inherited cultural capital do have dreams which suggest fear of failure (being on the verge of falling or falling with fear, trying something repeatedly without success), it is usually a symbolised failure or a fear of possible failure, whereas the dreams of their social counterparts are of concrete and final failure and loss: being buried alive, being dead, failing

exams, fire, loved one's being dead, an aesthetic realism or barbarism which is also expressed in their greater propensity to say that their dreams could have happened in real life. While bringing to mind the different aesthetic dispositions of different classes (c.f. in particular Bourdieu 1984: 44-47), the fact that the culturally most privileged, like the museum visitors in *The Love of Art* (Bourdieu, Darbel & Schnapper 1991), also are more likely to remember anything from their rummages in their nightly halls of images is also suggestive that dream recall, like dream manufacture, is linked to aesthetic competence in waking life.[16]

The observed differences in dreaming – between male and female students, and between students of varying social inheritance – do in this way appear to follow a logic where their different social distance to necessity and thus their chances of failure are expressed. It is also linked to different aesthetic distancing to the dream image in a way which appear homologous to Bourdieu's main argument in *Distinction*. Taken together, this suggests the hypothesis that the "choice" of typical dreams follow the social logic of taste, and similarly involve a socially grounded aesthetics and competence. Ultimately, this homology between dreaming and waking life also suggests that, minus their bizarre formal qualities, which are very probably largely due to the brain biology of sleep, dreams are fundamentally a form of social practice and reflecting the general unity of practice (c.f. Bourdieu 1990: 102).

Considering this interpretation, one might also wonder if some of the appeal of dreams in our culture may not itself be a form of social repression, as dreams' seemingly bizarre and unregulated nature might lend them to fulfil a social function – namely to contribute to the myth of the free and essentially unsocialised, unrepressed, private core of our being, as we all, in the popular imagination – factory workers, academics, accountants and bus drivers – become artists and aeronauts at nightfall.

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Notes

[1] This work have earlier appeared in *Hunting High and Low*, eds. Hovden and Knapskog (Oslo: Spartacus/Scandinavian Academic Press, 2012).

[2] Kenelm Burridge on Tangu society, quoted in Kuper (1979: 645).

[3] Note that dreams in many instances appear as unmediated insights. For example, the god Balder in Vegtamskvida (in the *Poetic Edda*) has baleful dreams, which investigated by Odin in his visit to Hel turns out to be an omen of Balder's forthcoming death. Even gods may thus dream.

[4] Of course, such interpretation constitutes an important form of social control. Among the Omaha Indians, for example, where entrance to powerful societies was based on the mythical visions of young men, Margaret Mead notes that

those not coming from elite families were usually being told their vision was not authentic and turned down (Mead 1964).

[5] The English translation are from the English edition by Knut Liestøl (1946).

[6] Such visions also appear in more modern figures, like Adolf Hitler who was reportedly convinced of his divine mission through first a prophetic dream which helped him escape a gun strike at the Bavarian front in 1917, and later a vision in 1938 from the balcony at Schloss Schönbrunn in Vienna of Odin in the skies pointing east, affirming his plans to invade Russia (both epiphanies are described in Stevens (1995: 293-297).

[7] The classification of three main theories of dreams are from Stevens (1995).

[8] If a sociological study of dreams need a founding figure, the most suitable candidate (if one can overlook his interest in divination) is probably Artemidorus (c. 200 BC), who for the *Oneirocritica*, his five-volume work on dreams, interviewed more than 3000 persons, taking great care to record not only their dreams in great detail, but also what were happening in the their waking life (including their occupation).

[9] For the review of the ideas of dreams in Greek antiquity I am particularly indebted to William V. Harris' *Dreams and Experience in Classical Antiquity* (2009).

[10] "For all pre-modern analysts of dream content, the dream as it is experienced by the dreamer is not what it appears to be ... Sigmund Freud picked up on the distorted message idea and acted as the high priest whose psychological skills could tell the patient things he did not know about himself. All of these systems, including psychoanalysis, are essentially religions in that they are based on faith in an agency that gives hidden directives." (Hobson 2002: 16).

[11] 114 responded in 2004, 152 in 2006.

[12] "These very dream thoughts which, going by my feelings, have a claim to the greatest importance are either not present at all in the dream content, or are represented by some remote allusion in some obscure region of the dream." (Freud 1899: II).

[13] Some of these methodological shortcomings could obviously have been improved by simple procedures. An alternative approach for a structural study of dreams, following the pioneer work of psychologists Calvin S. Hall and Robert Van de Castle would be instead to provide the students with dream journals to be filled out on awakening, which could later be coded through content analysis (cf. Domhoff 1996).

[14] The fact that the analysis was done on bachelor students following a course in Media Studies at a regional college, that is, a social group with great social homogeneity (of age in particular, but also in terms of social backgrounds – where in particular working-class backgrounds are very uncommon) probably is one reason for the absence of this vertical social dimension.

[15] This statistical model of the space of student dreams is the result of a multiple correspondence analysis of 266 students and their recall (yes / no) of ever having dreamt an of a list of 35 typical dreams (the most uncommon dreams were excluded). Indicators of social class (father's type of education and income), gender and two questions regarding how often they recalled their dreams and their general realism were then projected into this space as supplementary points, without influencing the construction. The logic of the analysis is similar to Bourdieu's studies of variants of dominant and petite-bourgeoise taste in *Distinction* (1984: 262,340), which is often termed a symbolic space (in contrast to the social space constructed by the main analysis in that book). Benzécri's modified rates of inertia (Le Roux & Rouanet 2010, 39) for the first five axes are 48.8%, 13.0%, 9.2%, 7.1% and 6.2%. Categories in bold type are important modalities (Rouanet & Le Roux 1993: 218) whose contributions to the second or third axis exceed the average. The size of the fonts are general indicators of the quality of a category's representation in this space, larger fonts being better.

[16] A possible related finding that two dream types (which were not included in the MCA because of their difference to the other types of dreams) of being very near to – or far away from – an object in a non-sexual way are both associated with culturally privileged backgrounds (west-southwest in the map), likewise suggest that the recall of details and aesthetic properties of dreams expresses a general aesthetic competence.

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