A CENTURY OF DREAM INTERPRETATION
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Antiquity

- Supernatural and external explanations $\leftrightarrow$ natural and internal explanations

- The dream
  - A visitation
  - Predicts the future
  - Transmits messages
  - Has a prophetic function
  - Is sent from the deity: indications of divine intentions
Dreams in the Bible
The dream in the Middle Ages and early modern times

► A communication from God or from the Devil.

► A dream always necessitates an interpretation

► Dreams are symbolic
Dreams in the 18th century

- Dreams have physical causes: indigestion
- A dream adds insight into one’s life
- Dreams have a healing function
- The social function of dreams
  - Told to family members
  - A way to pass a pedagogical message to the children
  - A form of catharsis
  - They help to understand one’s own desires and impulses
  - A way to get the attention of others
  - Contributes to closeness
Dreams in the 19th century

- Empirical dream research starts around 1860
- The origin of dreams is sought in the inner world and in one’s body
- The notion of the unconscious develops.
Sigmund Freud, 1900
Sigmund Freud, 1900

- The royal road to the discovery of the unconscious
- Dreams have a meaning
- The wish fulfilment theory
- Mechanisms of dream work
- Recurrent nightmares are the result of trauma
Contemporary dream interpretation

Regardless of the culture, people are interested in their dreams and want to obtain insight into underlying motives.

- An empirical approach to dreams (psychology)
- A psychoanalytical approach to dreams (Freud, Jung, Bion)
- Dreams and neuroscience (neuropsychoanalysis dr. Mark Solms)
The movies, our collective dreams

- Beginning of the movies coincides with the great interest in the scientific investigation of dreams.
- The film medium as an analogy of dreaming (Méliès, Lumière).
Luis Bunuel: *Un chien andalou*, (1929)

- Fragment of the film
The dream as a transformation

- The experienced dream
- The remembered dream
- The dream told to an psychoanalyst
- The dream as understood in a psychoanalysis
- The dream as described in a lecture
Un chien andalou as a dream

- **Phenomenology:**
  - A complex hallucinatory episode
  - Of a predominantly visual nature
  - Unfolding in time during sleep
  - Volatile and changeable
  - One image changes into another
  - Absence of logic
  - Incoherent, reconciles contradictions
  - Absurd content
  - Disorientation, uncertainty about the space
  - Composite figures
  - Takes place in a 3 dimensional space not on a flat screen
  - Seems to occur in the present time
  - An affective occurrence
  - Change of one’s reflective consciousness
  - Easily forgotten
The dreams in *Wild Strawberries*, Ingmar Bergman (1957)

- The whole film can be compared with a psychoanalytic session of a neurotic patient.
- A good dream
Wild Strawberries, Ingmar Bergman (1957)

- Fragment of film 2
What is the meaning of this dream?

- Does the dream have a meaning?
- What is the meaning for the film character?
- What is the meaning for the movie maker?
- What is the effect of the spectator?
There are several meanings of a dream

- The fulfilment of an unconscious wish
- A picture of the state of the self
- A representation of relations among internal objects in the inner world
- A portrait of the subjective state of the dreamer
- A thinking process
- A source of wisdom: the revelation of a deep truth about one’s self
- The aesthetic dimension of the dream
Wild Strawberries, Ingmar Bergman (1957)

- Fragment of film 3
Wild Strawberries, Ingmar Bergman (1957)

- We are able to live in two worlds
- Movement towards the depressive position
Inception, Christopher Nolan (2010)

- The content of the film: the complexity of dreams, multiple layers in dreams
- The dream as a work in progress
- The manifest dream is an interpretation of an emotional experience.
- The polyphony of dreams (Kaës)
- The intersubjective approach of dreams (Bion, Brown)
  - The dream space is open to others (mutual, shared with others)
  - Intergenerational transmission of dreams
- Every dream needs further processing: the dream as an invitation for further thinking and dreaming (Ogden, Schneider).
- Not all dreams may be understood!
- The dream as an aesthetic experience (Meltzer)
Inception, Christopher Nolan (2010)

- Fragment of film 4