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THE LOGIC AND ILLOGIC OF THE DREAM-WORK

JOHN SALLIS

THE DREAM-WORK is a matter of translation, a work of translation. Only of translation. Nothing else. Nothing more. In and through the dream-work nothing is produced except a translation.

This at least is what Freud says of the dream-work, that its work consists solely in translating, that its work produces nothing but a translation. In the dream-work as such—though not in the constitution of what is given to it to be worked—the psyche functions solely as a translator, carries out—below the level of consciousness—the work of translating.

But what, then, gets translated? Of what does the dream-work produce a translation? Freud identifies it again and again, names it in various formulations, various translations, says—perhaps most directly—that the dream-work “accomplishes nothing else but a translation of the dream-thoughts” [*eine Übersetzung der Traumgedanken*].¹ This name already in effect says what is produced by translating the dream-thoughts, what they are translated into—namely, the dream itself. Or rather, the dream-thoughts are translated into what in other contexts, contexts other than that of psychoanalysis, one would commonly take as simply the dream itself. Thus, one would perhaps say—or at least wish to say—that the dream-thoughts are simply the thoughts underlying the dream. Yet if it is a matter of translation and not just of expression, the relation of the dream-thoughts to what they would thus underlie cannot be constituted by simple relocation or transposition, for translation, as nearly all will attest, invariably produces distortion and loss in what is translated, in what undergoes translation.

This difference is what, on the one hand, allows Freud to “work out the solution [*Lösung*] of the dream” (p. 280) in a new way while, on the other hand, endlessly complicating that solution. No longer will it be a matter of deciphering the mere surface, or, rather, what is now recognized as being mere surface; merely interpreting as such the dream’s manifest content—which otherwise one would have taken as the dream itself—cannot suffice. For this content is—proves to be—only the result of a process of translation of something else, of the dream-thoughts that underlie the dream-content and yet are concealed from the dreamer both in the course of dreaming and afterward when the dream is remembered. Thus distinguishing between the manifest content of the dream and the latent content, the underlying dream-thoughts, Freud identifies a task, the “new task,” one “that did not exist before” (p. 280), that could not exist as long as one adhered to the surface of the dream without recognizing it as such, as long as one took the mere surface, the manifest content, to be the dream as such. The task is to investigate the relationship between the two distinctly posited levels, to trace (*nachspüren*) the processes (*Vorgänge*) by which the manifest content has come to be from the latent content.

The way in which Freud introduces his new solution tends initially to dissolve the very difference that makes it possible. He begins: “Dream-thoughts and dream-content lie before us [*liegen vor uns*] like two representations [*Darstellungen*] of the same content in two different languages” (p. 280). But—one will ask—do they both *lie before us*? And to whom is it that the first-person plural pronoun refers? Before whom—if before anyone—do they lie, both of them—so it seems—uniformly, both to the same degree? Certainly not before the dreamer, not even when, having awakened, he remembers the dream and perhaps narrates it. The dream-content may indeed lie before him, but the dream-thoughts definitely do not. They remain concealed as long as the psychoanalyst has not carried out an interpretation of the dream sufficient to reveal them. Before whom, then, do they lie revealed? Primarily before the psychoanalyst, though the associations carried out before him by the dreamer will typically have played an indispensable role in the interpretation of the dream. Many years later Freud reinforces this structure by distinguishing between two tasks.² The first is the practical task carried out by means of dream interpretation (*Traumdeutung*): it consists in transforming (*umwandeln*) the manifest dream—Freud calls it here the dream-text—into the latent dream-thoughts. The second task, the theoretical task, consists in explaining how in the dreamer—in his *Seelenleben*—the latent dream becomes the manifest dream. It would seem that the second task must indeed be second, that is, subsequent to the practical task, which would first have exposed the depth, the underlying dream-thoughts, lying under the surface, under the manifest dream. Whatever theoretical anticipation might have been in play, the practical interpretation of dreams is what would first actually open up the space in which the theoretical task geared to the dream-

work could commence. Only through the interpretation of dreams does the theoretical work presented in *The Interpretation of Dreams* become possible. The question is whether the logic of this configuration can be other than simply circular, whether the practical task of interpreting dreams can proceed without presupposing what only the theoretical task can establish: the dream-work, which sustains the difference precisely by distorting the dream-thoughts into something quite other.

Even at this very general level it is a question of a logic and a hermeneutics that would negotiate the pertinent circularity in terms laid down by that logic. At this level the logic would be determined by the way in which the function of the dream-work within the theoretical-practical configuration as a whole came to be construed. Yet it is a logic of the configuration, not the logic of the dream-work proper (assuming that *propriety* can retain a determinate sense in reference to the dream-work).

One may put aside, then, all the complications posed by the supposition that dream-thoughts and dream-content *lie before us*. In reference to this passage, which orients the entire chapter on the dream-work, what is more to the point is to observe how close Freud has already come to construing both dream-thoughts and dream-content as texts: he says that they are like representations of the same content in two different languages. Because they are like texts in different languages, one of them can be taken as a translation of the other: “or better said, the dream-content looks to us like a translation [*erscheint uns als eine Übertragung*] of the dream-thoughts into another mode of expression” (p. 280). Freud formulates the—presumably theoretical—task: “we are to get to know its [i.e., the translation’s] signs and laws of grammatical construction.” How are we—whoever the *we* may be—to do so, to become familiar (*kennenlernen*) with the signs and the syntactical laws of the translation? Again, it seems that both must to some degree lie before us; for Freud says explicitly that this familiarity with the signs and syntax of the translation is to be acquired “by comparing the original and the translation” [*durch die Vergleichung von Original und Übersetzung*]. In any case Freud insists that “the dream-thoughts become understandable to us without further ado, as soon as we have learned these” [*sie* is formally ambiguous here; though it could refer to *dream-thoughts*, presumably its reference is to *signs and laws of grammatical construction*]. The point is that once one recognizes the manifest content as a translation and—by comparison with the dream-thoughts—becomes acquainted with its manner of construction, with the laws of translation, then the dream-thoughts underlying that manifest content become understandable. In what does this becoming understandable without further ado (*ohne weiteres verständlich*) consist? Freud answers: “The dream-content is given, as it were, in a pictograph [*Bilderschrift*] whose signs are to be translated individually into the language of the dream-thoughts,” as one would translate—Freud develops the example—a rebus. Once one knows how in general the translation has come about, once one knows the laws

governing the translation of the dream-thoughts into the dream-content, then it will not be difficult, beginning with a dream-content, to countertranslate it back into the dream-thoughts of which it is a translation. Everything will depend, then, on discovering the laws governing the original translation, that is, governing the translation of the original. Yet one wonders whether this discovery can completely dispense with—or postpone until after its work is done—all countertranslating. Can the circularity—which already has proven not to be simple—be so simply put aside?³

It is in the penultimate chapter of *The Interpretation of Dreams*, entitled simply “The Dream-work,” that everything preceding is finally brought together into a definitive orientation. Afterward, in the final chapter, a transition is made to another level; Freud could hardly have marked this more clearly than he did at the outset of the final chapter where he contrasts the previous paths, which “led us into the light,” with those on which he is about to venture and that, he confesses in advance, “lead into the dark” (p. 490).⁴ In this sense, one can say that *The Interpretation of Dreams* culminates or is centered in the chapter on the dream-work. In this respect it mirrors the operative structure that it articulates; for that structure, differentiating between manifest and latent dream-content, is itself centered in the dream-work.

The chapter “The Dream-work” is devoted to determining how the translation of the dream-thoughts into the dream-content is carried out, to formulating the laws or principles that govern the translation. In other words, Freud’s task is to distinguish and to describe the various forms of work, the modes of working, that, taken together, constitute the dream-work as such. Throughout the delimitation of these moments of the dream-work, there remains continuous tacit reference to the translational character of the work carried out. Indeed, in the case of one moment, the work of displacement (*Verschiebungsarbeit*), the translational character is so emphasized that a word translatable as *translation* becomes a synonym for the proper name of the moment. According to Freud’s account, the work of displacement is what brings it about that the dream is centered differently from the dream-thoughts. The value had by particular elements among the dream-thoughts is not retained in the dream-content; the most valuable elements among the dream-thoughts are stripped of their value, and their place is taken by other elements to which little value was attached at the level of the dream-thoughts. Thus, the work consists here in a displacement of the psychological intensity of the individual elements, as in Freud’s own dream of the botanical monograph in which the element of the dream-thoughts concerned with “the complications and conflicts arising from obligations incurred by services between colleagues” is displaced into the element “botanical” (see pp. 183–189). To designate this work, this moment of the dream-work, Freud uses two terms: *Verschiebung* (displacement) but also *Übertragung*, translatable as *transference* but equally—especially considering the common etymology (Latin *transfero*)—as *translation*. Freud’s way of expressing the consequence of such *Übertragung*

gives further warrant for translating the word as *translation*: “as a consequence the difference between the texts [*Textverschiedenheit*] of the dream-content and the dream-thoughts appears” (p. 307). Construing them as texts, Freud is declaring that the difference between the dream-thoughts and the dream-content—indeed the very formation of the manifest dream in its difference from the latent content—is brought about by such translating.

Yet, as he proceeds to delimit successively the individual moments of the dream-work (condensation, displacement, regard for representability), Freud comes finally to the conclusion that in the dream-content there is one element, one kind of content, that has no correlate in the dream-thoughts. This element occurs among those that, within the dream, are expressive of a certain criticism of the dream, of a certain resistance to its content. To be sure, Freud insists that most of the stirrings of criticism in which the dreamer is, for instance, astonished or annoyed by the dream or even recoils from its content derive from the dream-thoughts no less than does the dream-content to which these are reactions. Yet he grants that some critical responses within the dream cannot be so derived, have no correlate in the dream-thoughts. Freud cites a criticism that he says is quite often met with in dreams, a criticism that is no longer merely a mute, affective striving but that is expressed in the declaration “After all, it’s only a dream.” To explain such a case, Freud has recourse to the concept of the censor, to the supposition that a psychic censorship is decisively operative in dreams. In *The Interpretation of Dreams* this supposition is axiomatic; the operation is neither put into question nor analyzed in a thorough and rigorous manner. It is not insignificant that Freud introduces the notion of a censor behind dream-distortion by elaborating an analogy between such censorship and that operative in political situations, the censorship in face of which political writers can avoid having their words completely suppressed only if they speak allusively or conceal their objectionable views behind some disguise. Freud says: “The correspondence, traceable down to the last detail, between the phenomena of censorship and those of dream-distortion justifies us in assuming similar preconditions for both” (p. 160).

One could say indeed that the notion of the censor is one of the primary axioms of Freud’s text, for even in those modes—the principal modes: condensation, displacement, regard for representability—in which the dream-work consists in translating the dream-thoughts into dream-content, what prompts the translation, what makes the dream-work necessary, is the operation of censorship. Because the dream-thoughts come under censor, they can enter consciousness as dream-content only if, like the views of political writers in a situation of censorship, they are sufficiently disguised. They come to be disguised by being translated into something different, as into another language. It is as if political writers were to publish their texts only in translation into a language illegible to those in power—or at least, as such writers have always done, into a tale whose genuine intent remains illegible.

In the case of the criticism expressed within the dream yet against the dream, the criticism expressed in the words “After all, it’s only a dream,” the role of the censor is not to prompt or require a translation of the content but rather to intervene directly. Freud would have these words be the words of the censor, words uttered when, caught unaware, it is too late to suppress an objectionable content, to disguise it by the usual means, by translation. In such cases, something enters the dream that does not derive from the dream-thoughts. Thus, the dream-content proves not to consist solely of elements translated from the dream-thoughts. In such cases there will also be elements that derive from the direct intervention of the censor, something interjected to compensate for a lack of vigilance or, in any event, for some lack or other that otherwise would throw the economy of psychic censorship off balance: “There is no doubt that the censoring agency, whose influence we have so far recognized only in restrictions and omissions in the dream-content, is also responsible for interpolations and additions” (p. 471). These products of what Freud calls secondary revision or reworking (*die sekundäre Bearbeitung*) display certain features, which he marks: they are not particularly vivid, are less easily retained by the memory, and are always to be found at points in the dream-content where they can function to link two pieces of dream-content. Most significantly, the purpose served by secondary revision is to fill the gaps in the structure of the dream: “The result of its labor is that the dream loses its appearance of absurdity and incoherence and approaches the pattern of an intelligible experience” [*dem Vorbilde eines verständlichen Erlebnisses*] (pp. 471–472).

Thus, in secondary revision the dream undergoes a very deep and thorough reworking by, as Freud describes it, “a psychic function that resembles waking thought” (p. 472), by a function that in any case introduces into the dream the form and coherence demanded by waking thought. Or rather, more precisely, this function imposes form and coherence on what has been produced by the other three moments of the dream-work, the translational moments of condensation, displacement, and regard for representability. Though in *The Interpretation of Dreams* he refers explicitly to secondary revision as a part of the dream-work (*dieses Stück der Traumarbeit* [p. 471]), Freud will later qualify this assignment, remarking that, strictly speaking, secondary revision is *not* a part of the dream-work.⁵ One could say of secondary revision: it belongs to the dream-work inasmuch as it contributes to the formation of the dream-content, but it is set apart from the other moments inasmuch as it does not translate dream-thoughts, does not deform them into dream-content, but rather imposes form on the deformed content. With its form, its coherence, restored, the dream seems to make sense, to have a meaning (*einen Sinn zu haben* [p. 472]). But this sense is not the sense—not even a sense—belonging properly to the content of the dream; it is an imposed sense and is even, says Freud, “furthest removed from the actual sense of the dream” (p. 472).

There is reason to say that secondary revision institutes the logic of the dream-work. But then one would be obliged to add that this logic is not properly the logic of the dream-work—whatever that logic might be, if there is such a logic—but only a logic that serves to conceal the absurdity and incoherence of the translation produced by the dream-work, by its (other) three moments. It would be the logic of the dream-work only as the logic of a single moment of the dream-work, of a moment that later will be said not to be, strictly speaking, a part of the dream-work. It is a logic of the dream-work that serves precisely to conceal the illogic of the dream-work.

In this regard the question of the logic of the dream-work is inseparable from the question of sense or meaning (*Sinn*). Here the word *logic* does not designate a discipline that would determine the ideal laws governing thought in various regards but rather those laws themselves, not in the form of laws but rather as they must be exemplified by whatever becomes an object of thought. In other words, *logic* designates here the forms of connection that must be had by something, by some content, in order for it to be thought in some regard or other. In the case of the logic instituted in the dream-work through secondary revision, this regard has to do with meaning. Whereas the translational moments of the dream-work give it the appearance of absurdity and incoherence, the logic instituted through secondary revision renders it intelligible or understandable (*verständlich*). But whatever is understandable is so precisely because it has a meaning, because it offers a meaning to understanding. Whereas the product of the translational moments has the appearance of absurdity and incoherence, of non-sense, whereas it displays an apparent illogic, the dream-content acquires, through secondary revision, forms of connection such that the dream comes to make sense, to have a meaning. And yet, it is a meaning that does not belong to this content, an alien meaning that must be forced to adhere to it by the very force of censorship but that nonetheless remains “furthest removed from the actual sense of the dream” (p. 472). This logic of the dream-work is a false imposition, a false sense, a sham logic.

But can there be a false meaning otherwise than in contrast to a true meaning? Freud is confident that dreams have a meaning, one that properly belongs to them, that is true to them. After the critical survey with which *The Interpretation of Dreams* begins, Freud’s very first move is to posit such meaning. As the title of his text indicates, the task he undertakes is “to show that dreams are capable of an interpretation” [*Deutung*]; and, as he continues, “‘to interpret a dream’ is to determine its ‘meaning’” [*heisst, seinen ‘Sinn’ angeben*] (p. 117). Freud’s very undertaking is linked to the supposition that beneath the dream there is meaning, that dreams are not ultimately non-sense. He gives every appearance of being confident that, as he says of certain absurd dreams that he discusses, “the absurdity of the dream-content is only apparent [*ein Anschein*] and disappears as we go deeper into the meaning of the dream” (p. 413). And yet even to refer to the process of going deeper

into the meaning of the dream is to grant that the meaning may not be revealed all at once, that it can be extended, articulated in depth, and that its various moments—the various dream-thoughts—may be such as can be revealed only gradually. Indeed Freud grants that one always remains less than certain of having revealed all the dream-thoughts underlying a dream: “actually one is never certain of having completely interpreted a dream; even when the solution seems satisfying and without gaps, it remains always possible for a further meaning to announce itself through the same dream” (p. 282). Thus, the meaning of a dream is open-ended; even if nothing whatsoever has indicated that it is outstanding, a further meaning can always come to light. No interpretation could ever be declared finished and in itself complete.

There are passages in which Freud goes beyond even this open-endedness of meaning. The most remote and yet severe and enigmatic limit to the interpretation of dreams is broached in two passages, both of which, though they are far apart in Freud’s text, refer to what he calls the navel of the dream. The first passage is a note that Freud appends to his analysis of the dream of Irma’s injection. In this connection he writes of concealed meaning, of not having gone far enough in his interpretation of the dream to follow all the hidden meaning (“*um allem verborgenen Sinn zu folgen*” [p. 130]). Then he adds, generalizing: “Every dream has at least one place where it is unfathomable [*unergründlich*], the navel, as it were, by which it is connected to the unknown” [*durch den er mit dem Unerkannten zusammenhängt*]. One will want to ask: What is this navel of the dream? Yet one would first have to determine—even to make the question a possible question—that the navel is a *what*, an essence, a meaning, whereas this is precisely what remains questionable at this place where the dream is unfathomable and connected to the unknown. It is little wonder that Freud makes no attempt to say what this place is but instead has recourse to the metaphors of the navel.

The second of the two passages comes much later in Freud’s text, in the final chapter where, as he acknowledges, “all paths lead into the dark” (p. 490). This passage extends the metaphors of the first, compounding it with the figures of light and darkness: “The best-interpreted dreams often have a place that has to be left in the dark, because one notices in the course of interpretation that at this place a knot [ball, tangle: *Knäue*] arises, which refuses to be unraveled but which also offers no further contribution to the dream-content. This is, then, the navel of the dream and the place beneath which lies the unknown” (p. 503). No matter how thoroughly interpreted, a dream may have a place of utter resistance, a tangle that cannot be unraveled, the threshold of the unknown and presumably unknowable. One wonders in what sense—whether still in the order of sense—this tangle “offers no further contributions to the dream-content.” Is it only that, since the tangle cannot be unraveled, the meanings that it harbors cannot be revealed and thus shown to contribute, by way of the dream-work, to the dream-content? Or is it that the tangle has nothing to offer to the dream-content,

that it harbors no dream-thoughts that could be translated into dream-contents, that it is the place where meaning ceases so that what lies beneath it is unknowable by virtue of being anterior to the very order of meaning and understanding. Derrida puts the question succinctly: "one may wonder whether the in-soluble knot, the umbilicus, is of the stuff of sense [*sens*] or whether it remains radically heterogeneous, in its very secret, to signifiable sense, as well as to the signifier, and one may also wonder whether what discourages the analyst, provisionally or definitively, is homogeneous or not with the space of analytic work, the work of interpretation (*Deutungsarbeit*)."⁶

This question of the limit of meaning, of the character of this limit, will return in another guise, from a direction that still has to be laid out. Yet, regardless of how it might be decided, even if it should prove quite undecidable, the question of the logic of the dream-work would remain unanswered, would remain in a sense—by its reduction to a question of sense—untouched. For just as the logic, the meaning, imposed by secondary revision is a logic apart from the dream-work and is in this respect a false meaning, a sham logic, so the meaning that would be revealed through the interpretation of dreams is situated at the limit of the dream-work, at a point where the dream-work has not yet commenced. For the meaning of a dream is nothing other than the underlying dream-thoughts, which in and through the dream-work come to be translated into the dream-content. In other words, the meaning of the dream is what gets taken up by and into the dream-work and under the surveillance of censorship gets reworked—that is, distorted—into the dream-content. It is not the meaning—or, more precisely, the logic—of the dream-work as such. Anterior to the dream-work in the order of translation, the meaning of the dream is what gets translated, in distinction from the forms of connection that are produced in and through the dream-work and that would constitute its logic proper.

But if the logic of a content or process lies in the forms of connection that must be had by it in order for it to be thought in some regard or other, can one even suppose that there is a logic of the dream-work, since the work of the dream-work consists, not in instituting form and connection, but in deforming and disconnecting? In different terms, the question is whether there is some regard in which this deforming and disconnecting can be thought and, if so, what it is; for certainly these accomplishments of the dream-work cannot be thought as a coherent congeries of meaning.

One might attempt to determine the logic of the dream-work by following the directives that logic as a discipline traditionally followed. These directives prescribe attending to speech and to judgment; for it is in speech and in judgment that those forms that logic as a discipline would thematize occur concretely. Even if logic is, in the end, to determine the ideal laws governing speech and judgment, this priority would be reversed in the order of discovery. What about the speech and judgment carried out in the dream-work? Do these offer access to the logic of the dream-work?

Freud considers the case of dreams that contain speech, dreams in which the speech is distinct from thought. In these cases, he insists, “the rule holds without exception that the dream-speech derives from the remembered speech of the dream-material” (p. 304). The words spoken may be retained intact or they may be slightly altered, and in either instance their sense is likely to be changed. Thus, the dream-work itself issues in no speech at all but at most deforms the meanings of words taken over from the dream-material. As Freud writes: “The dream-work is also incapable of newly creating speech” (p. 406). In this sense there is no speech *of* the dream-work but only its deforming of the speech taken over from the dream-material. Freud insists that analysis in this regard always shows the same thing: that the dream-work takes up mere fragments of speech and deals with them quite arbitrarily (*willkürlich*), at least in ways that, measured against the speech as it was, appear quite arbitrary.

The dream-work is no more capable of judgment than it is of speech. In this connection Freud is even more emphatic: “*A moment in the dream that appears to be an activity of the function of judgment is not to be taken as an act of thinking [Denkleistung] on the part of the dream-work [der Traumarbeit]; rather, it belongs to the material of the dream-thoughts and has passed from there as a ready-made structure into the manifest dream-content*” (p. 430). Thus, within the translational dream-work itself—as distinct from what, in very different ways, is given to it by the underlying dream-thoughts and by secondary revision—there is indigenously neither speech nor judgment. The traditional directives—that the logical forms are to be sought in speech and judgment provide no aid in gaining access to the logic of the dream-work.

Indeed, if one considers what Freud says directly about the relation of the dream-work to logic, one may well wonder whether there is in any sense—or even beyond sense—a logic of the dream-work. For Freud depicts the dream-work primarily as undoing the logic that, anterior to the dream-work, lies in the connections between the dream-thoughts. It would seem that in the dream-work itself, prior to the onset of secondary revision, there is no logic but only the illogic that secondary revision then covers up with its facade of form and coherence.

For this depiction Freud sets the stage by declaring that between the individual parts of the complicated structure of the dream-thoughts there are the most various logical relations. Next comes the scene of the dream-work: “Then, when the entire mass of these dream-thoughts is submitted to the pressure of the dream-work, and the pieces are turned about, broken up, and pushed up against one another, rather like surging ice-floes, the question arises: what has become of the bonds of logic that had previously given the structure its form . . . [and] without which we can understand neither propositions nor speech?” (p. 310). Freud offers an initial answer, one that is still provisional: “one must initially [*zunächst*] answer that the dream has no means at its disposal for representing these logical relations among the dream-

thoughts. For the most part it disregards all these prepositions and takes over only the factual content [*den sachlichen Inhalt*] of the dream-thoughts to work upon. It is left to the interpretation of the dream to reestablish the connections that the dream-work has destroyed" (pp. 310–311). The dream-work—so this initial answer goes—dismantles the logical structure of the dream-thoughts; it leaves the dream-material largely "divested of its [logical] relations" (p. 335).

Yet this is only an initial, provisional answer. While continuing to maintain that the dream-work undoes the logical relations of the dream-material, Freud grants, on the other hand, that the dream-work can take a certain account of particular logical relations by means of certain modes of representation. Freud compares the process to that of painters, who, unable to make use of speech in painting and unwilling to have recourse to scrolls issuing from the mouths of painted figures, found distinctively painterly means for expressing—for instance, through gestures—the intention of the words spoken by the figures. Thus, the dream-work renders *logical connection* as such by means of *simultaneity*, concentrating all the pieces of the dream-thoughts in a representation of a single situation or event. Freud compares such representation to that of the painter (Raffaello) who assembles all the philosophers and poets in a single painting (*The School of Athens*). Spatial proximity, in dreams as in painting, can serve to represent significant relations of another order, whether the order of logical relations or that of an intellectual and artistic legacy.

The dream-work also carries out such representation with respect to specific logical connections. For instance, causal relations between things thought in the dream-thoughts can be represented in the dream-work by presenting the cause or condition as an introductory dream and then the effect or conditioned as the main dream. Another method of representing causal relations is by actually transforming one image (the cause) into another (the effect). Freud concludes: "in both cases *causation* is represented by *succession* [Nacheinander], in the first case by one dream following another, in the second by the immediate transformation of one image into another" (p. 314).

The dream-work is less effective in representing alternation ("either . . . or"). The alternatives are represented either as options having equal rights or by the division of the dream into two halves. But what Freud finds most striking—and what indeed has the most far-reaching consequences—is the way in which the dream-work represents the category of opposition and contradiction (*die Kategorie von Gegensatz und Widerspruch*): "This is simply disregarded. To the dream 'No' seems not to exist. In particular, it prefers to draw opposites together into a unity or to represent them as one" (p. 316). A similar means is used—more effectively, in Freud's judgment—to represent similarity, congruence, having features in common; this is represented by concentration, by drawing together into a unity whatever is thus related.

In the last chapter of *The Interpretation of Dreams*, Freud returns to the question of how the dream-work takes up the logical relations that connect the dream-thoughts. In raising this question again, his primary intention is to explain what happens to these logical relations, to explain this happening in terms of the theoretical representation of the psyche that he introduces at this final, very different stage of his investigation. His explanation is based on the concept of regression: regression occurs in psychic activity when, instead of moving toward the motor end of the system, an excitation moves toward the sensory end and finally reaches the system of perceptions. Instead of a motor response to the excitation, the response is hallucinatory, as in the case of dreams, which, Freud insists, “have a *regressive* character” (p. 518). It is because of this regressive character that logical relations get lost, because such relations lie beyond the circuit of regression. But what in this discussion is most important for the question of the logic of the dream-work is the forcefulness with which—despite all that he has said about how the dream manages certain sorts of representations of logical relations—Freud reaffirms the loss of these relations and the difficulty with which they are represented. Here is Freud’s statement: “If we regard the process of dreaming as a regression within our hypothetical psychical apparatus, this explains without further ado the empirically established fact that all the logical relations between the dream-thoughts are lost in the course of the dream-work or are expressed only with difficulty. . . . *In the course of regression the structure [Gefüge] of the dream-thoughts is dissolved into its raw material*” (p. 519).

And yet, a trace of that structure remains in the guise of the representations that the dream-work forms of the logical categories, that it forms precisely in deforming these categories.⁷ What exactly is involved in this deforming-forming through which the categories are lost but a kind of representation of them remains in place of them? In virtually every case that Freud describes, the representation that comes to replace a category is a representation of a spatial or temporal relation. Thus, logical connections in general, says Freud, come to be represented by simultaneity or spatial proximity. It is likewise with the representations of specific logical relations. Causal relations are represented by separating cause from effect in the form of the temporal sequence of an introductory dream followed by a main dream; or such a relation can be represented by transforming one image (cause) into the other (effect), that is, as temporal succession and spatial coincidence. Two equal portions in temporal succession can represent alternation. And both similarity and opposition/contradiction are represented by spatiotemporal concentration. Hence, in each case something corresponding to the category comes, by way of the dream-work, to take the place of the category and, as it were, to function in its stead. This representative of the category is not just an image that would somehow exemplify it but rather is a schema by which in each case the image, the dream-material, is given a spatiotemporal ordering that corresponds to the pertinent category. Here it would not

be inappropriate to speak of categorial or transcendental determinations of space/time, that is, of determinations that are of the same order as Kant's transcendental schemata.⁸ Thus, what the dream-work accomplishes with respect to the logical categories is precisely a schematizing; for each logical connection in the dream-thoughts, the dream-work substitutes a corresponding schema. If, in reference to the history of philosophy, one considers the enormity of the difference between concept and schema,⁹ then it is not surprising that Freud—without regarding that history, indeed on quite different grounds—declares that logical connections can be thus represented “only with difficulty.”

Thus, the logic of the dream-work is a schematized logic, a logic of schemata, of spatiotemporal determinations corresponding to the various logical categories. Yet if measured by traditional philosophical logic or by what Freud often calls waking thought, this logic of schemata cannot but appear to be contaminated by illogic. To mark its divergence, one could call it an exorbitant logic, a logic outside the orbit of the philosophical logic rooted in ancient ontology. It is exorbitant in that it is a logic that tolerates and even institutes the effacement of difference, as in the schema of causality, which can produce the transformation of one image into another different from it, a transformation of one into the other as if they were not different but mutually substitutable. This logic is perhaps even more exorbitant—or rather, exorbitant in a way that is paradigmatic of this exorbitancy as such—in the case of the schema provided for opposition and contradiction (*Gegensatz und Widerspruch*). Freud says that this logical connection “is simply disregarded” by the dream-work, for which “‘No’ seems not to exist.” In the stronger case, that of contradiction, Freud's point is that the necessity—prescribed by philosophical logic—of rejecting one or the other of two contradictory terms is simply disregarded, that the “No” that philosophical logic would require be said to one or the other term seems not to exist for the dream-work. Rather, the schematizing of contradiction consists in carrying out what philosophical logic could never—absolutely never—tolerate: it draws the contradictory terms together into a unity, lets them be together, holds them together, in their very contradictoriness. If measured by the logic of philosophy or of waking thought, with this schema, whose effects will spread throughout, the logic of the dream-work becomes virtually indistinguishable from illogic.¹⁰

If contradictory opposites are retained side by side, yoked together in a unity in which they remain nonetheless contradictorily opposed, then, by the usual standards, the very possibility of truth is undermined, the fundamental law of thought and discourse, the so-called law of non-contradiction, is violated. One could say that the dream-work is attached by its logic—most notably by its schema of contradiction—to a point where, by the standards of philosophical logic and waking thought, truth ceases, breaks off no less decisively than meaning breaks off at that place in the

dream-thoughts that Freud calls the navel of the dream. The dream-work, too, so it seems, has its navel.

The peculiarities of the logic of the dream-work can be seen taking shape almost from the beginning of *The Interpretation of Dreams*. Following his analysis of the dream—his own dream—of Irma’s injection, which is the first dream treated in Freud’s text, he notes that there are intrinsic inconsistencies operative. He says that the “explanations of Irma’s illness”—that is, the various moments of the explanation as a whole as it emerges from the analysis—“which concur in exonerating me [of blame for her illness] are not consistent with one another but on the contrary are mutually exclusive” [*schliessen einander aus*] (p. 138). Freud draws a comparison with “the defense offered by the man accused by his neighbor of returning a kettle to him in a damaged condition: in the first place the kettle was not damaged at all, in the second it already had a hole in it when he borrowed it, and in the third he had never borrowed a kettle from his neighbor” (pp. 138–139). This “kettle logic,” as Derrida calls it,¹¹ exemplifies the logic of the dream-work. It is likewise with that found in what Freud calls the embarrassment-dream of being naked. In such dreams one thing that is essential is “the embarrassing sensation of shame, of wanting to hide one’s nakedness, usually by mobility, and of being unable to do so.” One the other hand, “the people in whose presence one feels ashamed are almost always strangers, their faces left indefinite”; most significantly, “these people are indifferent.” Hence the contradiction: “Between them the shame and embarrassment of the dreamer and the indifference of the other people produce a contradiction of the kind that often occurs in dreams. After all, the only thing appropriate to the dreamer’s feeling would be for the strangers to gaze at him with astonishment and laugh at him, or be indignant at the sight” (p. 248). Here, then, there is a logic that yokes contradictory opposites together in the dream. Here, again, the exorbitant logic of the dream-work is operative.

Almost at the end of *The Interpretation of Dreams*, Freud returns to this theme: “Thoughts contradicting each other do not aim to cancel each other out, but persist side by side, often combining *as if there were no contradiction* into products of condensation, or they form compromises which we would never forgive our logical thinking for committing” (p. 566). Again, an exorbitant logic, a logic that borders on being indistinguishable from illogic: such is the logic of the dream-work.

With the dream-thoughts, however, it is quite otherwise. Freud insists that, prior to their being submitted to the dream-work, the dream-thoughts have a rational form (Freud’s phrase is: “*die vorher rationell gebildeten Traumgedanken*” [p. 566]). More often he characterizes the dream-thoughts as *korrekt*. Here is the most explicit passage, which occurs near the end of Freud’s text: “Thus we cannot deny the insight that two essentially different psychical processes play a part in forming dreams; the one creates perfectly correct [*korrekt*] dream-thoughts, just as valid [*gleichwertig*] as normal thinking; the other treats

these in a highly disconcerting, incorrect way" (p. 567). The latter Freud then identifies as the genuine or proper dream-work (*die eigentliche Traumarbeit*), which he declares has been separated off or isolated (*abgesondert*).

What is most remarkable in this regard is the relation that Freud proposes between the dream-thoughts and phantasy (*Phantasie*). Referring to Scherner's view, which he had discussed in the initial chapter of *The Interpretation of Dreams*, Freud writes: "It is not that the dream forms phantasy, but that the unconscious activity of phantasy has the greatest share in the formation of the dream-thoughts" (p. 562). Most remarkably indeed, Freud is declaring that the dream-thoughts, which are rationally formed, correct, and as valid as normal thinking, are for the most part the product of phantasy. But *Phantasie* is just one of the names given to what more generally is called *imagination*. The dream-thoughts are for the most part formed by imagination, by an unconscious activity of imagination.

The question is whether imagination, thus operative in forming the dream-thoughts, can be kept out of the dream-work. A passage in which Freud is discussing the various modes of representation that the dream-work has at its disposal suggests otherwise. In this passage he considers the creation of the composite formations that often give dreams their fantastic character (*ein phantastisches Gepräge*). He writes: "The psychical process of forming composites [*Mischbildung*] in a dream is clearly the same as when, while awake, we represent or depict before us [*uns vorstellen oder nachbilden*] a centaur or a dragon" (p. 321). But this process, admitted into the dream-work, is just the process of phantasy, of imagination. It would seem, then, that the dream-work is perhaps less thoroughly separated off than Freud would like, that the limit that would separate the dream-thoughts from the dream-work is more fragile, more unstable, than one would have supposed.

Yet if imagination is engaged in the dream-work in the mode that Freud virtually acknowledges, will there be any limit to its engagement? To what extent does the logic of the dream-work prove to be a logic of imagination? For what other than imagination could produce a logic of schemata—granted, as Kant says, that "the schema is in itself always a product of imagination" and that such schematism is "an art concealed in the depths of the human soul."¹²

NOTES

1. Sigmund Freud, *Die Traumdeutung*, vol. 2 of *Studienausgabe* (Frankfurt a.M.: S. Fischer, 2000), 429. Translations are my own, though I have often consulted the translations by Joyce Crick (*The Interpretation of Dreams* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999]) and by James Strachey (*The Interpretation of Dreams* [New York: Avon Books, 1965]). Subsequent references to this work are given in the text according to the pagination of vol. 2 of the *Studienausgabe*.

2. In 1932 in his *Neue Folge der Vorlesungen zur Einführung in die Psychoanalyse*, in vol. 1 of *Studienausgabe*, 453.

3. This question of circularity, already posed by the difficulties arising from Freud's supposition that both the dream-thoughts and the dream-content "lie before us," formulates in a hermeneutical mode the same question that Derrida raises about the limit of the "metaphorical concept of translation." In "Freud and the Scene of Writing," Derrida writes: "Here again, the metaphorical concept of translation (*Übersetzung*) or transcription (*Umschrift*) is dangerous, not because it refers to writing, but because it presupposes a text that would be already there, immobile, the serene presence of a statue, of a written stone or archive whose signified content might be harmlessly transported into the element of another language, that of the preconscious or the conscious" (Jacques Derrida, *L'Écriture et la différence* [Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1967], 312–313).

4. Freud has especially in mind the schematic representation of the psyche as a whole that he is about to introduce and that governs much of the discourse of the final chapter. Following his reference to paths that "lead into the dark," he writes: "we will be obliged to put forth a set of new assumptions touching speculatively [*mit Vermutungen streifen*] on the structure of the psychic apparatus and the play of forces active in it, though we must take care not to spin them out too far beyond their first logical links, since otherwise their worth will vanish into uncertainty" (490).

5. This is noted by James Strachey in his translation of *The Interpretation of Dreams*, 528 n. 1.

6. Jacques Derrida, *Résistances de la psychanalyse* (Paris: Galilée, 1996), 29.

7. As noted earlier, Freud uses the word *Kategorie* in reference to the logical relations of opposition and contradiction.

8. I. Kant, *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, A137/B176–A147/B187.

9. The relation between concept and schema goes back, by a very complicated route, to the difference that comes briefly into view at the center of Plato's *Timaeus*, the difference between the intelligible εδη and the χώρα. See my discussion in *Chorology: On Beginning in Plato's "Timaeus"* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), esp. 154–155.

10. Freud writes: "Everything we have called the 'dream-work' appears to be so remote from the psychical processes we know to be correct, that the harshest judgment passed by our authors on the low psychical performance of dreaming cannot fail to seem perfectly right and proper" (563).

11. The expression "*la logique du chaudron*" (*Résistances de la psychanalyse*, 19) is rendered as "kettle logic" in the English translation: *Resistances of Psychoanalysis*, trans. Peggy Kamuf, Pascale-Anne Brault, and Michael Naas (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), 6.

12. Kant, *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, A140/B179–A141/B180.