Psychoanalysis and Dreams is the 38th Annual of Psychoanalysis, a journal of the Chicago Institute of Psychoanalysis and the Chicago Psychoanalysis Society. The series began in 1973, edited by George Pollack, and has had a list of distinguished editors, most recently Jerome Weiner. Weiner was succeeded by the joint editors of this volume, James William Anderson and Jeffrey Stein. A volume on dreams is a challenge to both editors and presenters. Is there anything new that can be said about dreams and dreaming, given more than a century of contributions from psychoanalysis and other disciplines?

For me, the most interesting section of the book was the fifth section, in which a sample dream provided by Dorothy Therese Grunes is analyzed from three perspectives. Arlene Kramer Richards calls herself a humanistic classical psychoanalyst, but I believe “eclectic Modern Freudian” would be more apt. Paul Lippman refers to himself as an “interpersonal Freudian Jungian ego psychologist.” Frank Summers develops his approach on an object-relational, self-psychological, relational platform.

In her comments, Arlene Kramer Richards shows us her eclectic approach: an emphasis on staying with the patient’s affect, as well as her own belief that “feeling is first,” with responses that facilitate her patient’s maximum autonomy. She looks for an organizing childhood experience and suggests that his mother’s six-month absence after her lobotomy made her return with “empty eyes.” I would also note that he was a replacement child, as he was born after a stillborn sister; and I would predict that that status would be consequential for how the analysis unfolds. In this case I feel that, for heuristic purposes, it would have been better to select a dream in which material from a larger span of time was available. The dream was from the fifth session and the follow-up was only one week later.
Paul Lippman, in the introduction to his interpersonal commentary, acknowledges that the interpersonal approach does not have an interest in a theory of mind; and I would add that the relational approach lacks it as well. The emphasis is not on understanding how the mind works, but in advancing the goals or therapy. I think there is disagreement about whether one can do the second without the first. Lippman points to the sense of authority in American psychoanalysis that is fueled by its initial home in medicine, an authority which is mostly absent from my own Freudian approach as a medical psychoanalyst, and from both Arlene Kramer Richards’ and Frank Summers’ approaches as well.

I think all three contributors agree that the dream is “the height of idiosyncratic, imaginative, original, creative, non-linear thinking.”[WHOSE QUOTE?] All three are comfortable in a post-positivist climate and have signed on to the interculturalist approach first developed by the new Freudsians, Fromm et al., and the interpersonalists. I think it is particularly evident in the contribution of Arlene Kramer Richards, who has been teaching and supervising Chinese students for more than four years.

Both Richards and Lippman agree that the meaning of dreams will emerge from associations. Lippman also calls for the analyst to stay with the actual dream image. I think that this is important because the dream is a visual rather than a lexical experience, something I learned from Otto Isakower, who taught that instead of saying “what comes to mind?” he (and I) would suggest the phrase “Let’s have a look at it.”

Lippman, in his commentary, offers a number of ideas that he finds useful in therapeutic work with dreams. He includes “staying with the image,” which he attributes to Jung and Hillman, and I attribute to Isakower. He argues against what he calls
“meaning addictions” and advocates being comfortable with multiplicity, ambiguity, lack of clarity, and openness to the unexpected. An aspect more Freudian than interpersonal is the conviction that in every dream there is an unfulfilled infantile sexual wish. This is a broad generalization, of course, but it reflects a theory of mind and a theory of development which I believe has been lost to some degree in an interpersonal or relational approach. Seek and you shall find? Perhaps Lippman’s response might be that the search for the wish, unless it makes sense to the patient, will not serve to enhance the collaborative approach to the dream that Lippman feels is essential.

In his commentary Lippman also stresses, as I have, the replacement child theme (which I have written about in other contributions and how it relates to the patient’s feeling that he would be better off if he did not exist). However, the replacement child dynamics are most evident when there is the active involvement of the parent who has lost the child, reflecting the parent’s attitude toward the living sibling. It would appear that the patient’s past-history mother was not sufficiently present to fuel that dynamic. However, Lippman rightly points out that the replacement child might have taken up residence in the patient’s mind, a bug residing within him that makes him sick. Finally, the replacement child may experience survivor’s guilt, which involves another set of dynamics which should unfold as the analysis progresses.

Frank Summers starts his commentary with the instruction that the analyst have the patient tell him what it is like to be in the dream before asking for associations. He makes a strong case for not asking for associations too early, which I agree with and which is consistent with my recommendation “Let’s have a look at it.” Summers asserts that a dream allows the dreamer to live in the affective state that he cannot remember,
experience, or think about in waking life. This patient can feel “the full power of the humiliation, despair, and dread better in the drama of the dream than by remembering or thinking about those shameful experiences in waking life.” The purpose this serves, according to Summers, is for the dreamer to gain an experiential sense of what he is up against in trying to move his life forward. He should not continue to remain invisible and disempowered. According to Summers, the purpose of his patient’s dream was to evoke the depth of his despair in order to show him “what he...needs to do to begin living.”

The dream then has a different didactic purpose for Summers than the dream would have for a Freudian. For the Freudian, the didactic purpose may be to show the patient his unconscious, unfulfilled childhood wish, but this is also driven by an effort to fulfill that wish in the dream state. The pleasure/pain principle is operative, and this idea is consistent with what we know about the neurophysiology of the REM cycle, as demonstrated in the work of Charles Fisher and others. I think Summers is invoking an unconscious ego function: a dream teacher who helps the dreamer to better understand his affective state. I am not sure how one can choose between these two approaches. I think a case can be made for either, because in both instances the dreamer learns something that he did not know previously.

Frank Summers, who responded to Dr. Grunes’ dream, also has written the last paper in the volume. He there continues the approach he presented in the commentary—to live in the dream. He counters the Freudian wish-fulfillment with the self-psychological view of dreams as self-states, presented most comprehensively by Stolorow and Atwood (1982). Summers writes “the motivating force of the dream for these theorists is not so much that it provides new information about the dreamer’s
unconscious life as that it dramatizes self and other configurations more vividly than they are experienced in waking life.” He adds that this view of dreaming “gives pride of place to the waking dream.”

Summers feels that Michael Robbins, who also has a paper in the volume, supports the view that the manifest dream “is a complete expression in its own language that cannot and need not be reduced to the thoughts of waking life.” But more on Robbins view to come. Summer cites Pontalis, Klein, and Bollas’ view of the dream as a means of understanding how the dreamer fits him or herself into his or her interpersonal environment. For me the wish-fulfillment/waking life distinction is not that black-and-white, because in my view a person’s childhood wishes, reflected in adult desires, is very much a part of a person’s psychic life.

Summers makes much of Freud’s belief that a dream is an hallucination composed of blocked visual excitations. I think more central to Freud’s metapsychology is the idea that the visual mode is activated because the motor mode is blocked, which has in fact been confirmed by neurophysiological studies showing that there is motor paralysis in the REM dreaming state. I do not agree that Freud misses the dramatic aspect of dreaming with his emphasis on wish fulfillment. Wishes are part of dramas, as every playwright knows. Certainly the dreams that Freud reports upon in the dream book and in his cases, Dora, the Wolfman, The Rat Man, et al., are dramatic narratives with the dreamer as writer, director, and often one of the protagonists. I do not agree that Freud’s theory misses the lived experience of the dream, as Summers asserts.

Invoking Heidegger that dreaming is a form of “being in the world” does not add to our understanding of the motive of the dream, or the function it serves for both
dream and analysis (cf. the communicative function of the dream, Bergmann). In any case, I do not think that Summers’ emphasis on the dream experience debunks the wish-fulfillment hypothesis, or that wish-fulfillment theory is reductionist. The concept of wish fulfillment is part of the broader theory of motivation (cite my paper on motivation) of psychoanalysis. This theory includes the centrality of the ambivalence conflicts of the child, with his attendant needs and wishes, which become a template for the psychology of adult life. Summers faults the analyst who looks at the dream “as a series of symbols hiding meaning,” but this ignores the fact that Freud, and most analysts since Freud, view symbols as the interpretation of last resort.

I think there is value in Summers’ emphasis on the analysand’s experience in dreaming. I will often ask my patients, “How did you feel in the dream?” as well as “What did you see?” The questions emphasize the experience, which can be followed by considering the patient’s associations. “What comes to mind as you recall your experience of the dream?” But in my view attention to the experience of the dream is the beginning, not the end point, of the task of getting to the analysand’s conflicted wishes, the motivational and genetic determinant of the analysand’s psychology. Summers concludes with the statement that the “dream is the royal road to a way of being that cannot be lived in the waking world.” But this does not answer the question of what constitutes impediments to that way of being in the waking world. It also does not tell us how we can help our analysand have more pleasure, less pain, less anxiety, less depressive affect, less guilt, and better adaptation—which in my view is the overarching goal of psychoanalysis.
Waud Kracke points out that dreams seek solutions for conflicts, for conflicted wishes, and that in fact all wishes are conflicted. Contra to Summers, Freud portrays the dream “as expressing conflicts that grow directly out of the dreamer’s current life.” Kracke is right on when he states that critics of Freud’s theory of dreams “take a part of the theory, ignoring the complexity of the whole, and then disparage that part...for its incompleteness.”

The idea that dreams integrate current events into long-term meaning was first argued persuasively by Stanley Palumbo and elaborated by Morton Reiser. Solms found that the neocortex is continually involved in dreaming, particularly the limbic system associated with motivation, which supports what I wrote earlier about dreams, wish-fulfillment, and motivation.

The second section of the Annual, “Historical Perspectives,” includes wide-ranging contributions on the subject of dreams by Bertram Cohler, Dennis B. Klein, Patricia Everett, and Andreas Mayer. Cohler gets to the heart of Freud’s dilemma and his challenge. How can he convince his readers that dreams are produced by wishes that do not enter conscious awareness? In order to succeed in this task, Freud had to use his own dreams and refer to his own life. Cohler shows how Freud’s conviction that dreams are driven by infantile sexual wishes came from his self-analysis and his description of his oedipus conflict. However, in Freud’s analysis of the dream of Irma’s injection, which he refers to as a fully analyzed dream, he does not present the childhood origin of the nuclear wish, presumably because he does not want to reveal too much about himself. However, he does provide the missing childhood material in a footnote to the Botanical
monograph that refers to childhood sexual play with his nephew and niece. Two boys and a girl parallel Freud, Fleiss, and Irma.

Dennis Klein considers the controversy about dreams between Rank and Freud in his paper on Rank and Freud: “Freud’s Frau Dori Dream and the Struggle for the Soul of Psychoanalysis.” Rank turns Frau Dori on its head. Freud sees it as his wish to have a family. Rank sees it as his wish for his wife to die, and for him not to have children and pursue his career. Klein sees Freud as more pro-establishment and Rank as antiauthoritarian. Rank is using Freud to work out his conflicts with his own father, as Freud’s pseudo-son. Freud is for rationality. Rank is for “non-coercive self-expression.” Rank’s *The Trauma of Birth* was the first challenge (preoedipal) to Freud’s oedipal theory.

Rank exalted the artist, as well as the unconscious. He tried to break with conventional Viennese morality, unlike Freud, who never gave up his wish to be accepted by both Viennese Jewish and non-Jewish society. Mabel Dodge, whose dreams are discussed by Patricia Everett, was in analysis with two prominent New York society analysts, Smith Ely Jelliffy and A.A. Brill. She recorded her dreams in her analysis with Jelliffy. The paper presents 140 dreams dreamt over a six-month period in 1916, with comments by Jellify. It is an account of a shared journey by analyst and analysand, with the joy of joint discovery about what drove Mabel Dodge. It is clear that at the end she becomes a believer in psychoanalysis and the unconscious, which belief she would like to share with others. She backs off from exploration of the transference—“the I-want transference”—but her conflicts about authority (father) and nurturance (mother) do draw in the figure of the analyst Dr. Jelliffy.
In his paper “Thinking in Cases,” Andrea Mayer presents the parallel between Galton’s composite photographs to identify statistical types and Freud’s reference to composite images in dreams, which enable the dreamer to express feelings about more than one person and to “act all the parts in the play single-handed.” I find this unique connection, and the fact that in the case of both the dream and the photograph the image is primal, to be in accordance with my view that dreaming is, first and foremost, a visual experience.

The papers by Slochower and Charles describe how reports of a dream can unstick a stuck treatment. In Slochower’s paper the dream is an erotic dream about the analyst, which brings to the fore the transference/countertransference dynamic and, like an enactment, leads to the recollection of a previously missed childhood relationship—mother and daughter (patient). Erotic feelings about the analyst in the dream or waking state are not to be ignored. They produce anxiety in both analysand and analyst—often they present more challenge to the analyst. Dr. Slochower’s response [what is it?] to her patient’s request that she reveal her own erotic feelings was a good way of responding to her request “without either rejecting or seducing her.” It seemed to be an effective way to get her analysis back on track and helped her patient to achieve “a fuller integration of erotic pleasure.”

Marilyn Charles, in her contribution “Fragmenting Foundation,” shows how dreams can be used as a guiding metaphor which anchors both treatment and patient when the latter’s relationship with reality is uncertain. I think the approach to the dream as guiding metaphor is akin to the self-psychological understanding of self-state dreams. My conclusion is that this view of dreams is more descriptive than explanatory, and does
not offer us an explanation of why past trauma or current conflicts should be represented in a dream. Nevertheless, this approach to the dream by so sensitive a therapist as Marilyn Charles can have therapeutic benefit. It helps the patient feel understood, which is always a valuable experience. In her case, she also introduces the parameters of psychological testing which helped her patient achieve a more realistic sense of his intellectual capabilities, which were in fact considerable. In this regard, she was able to think “outside the box,” which I find often has value as long as the rule about parameters is observed and the consequences exposed to analytic scrutiny.

In his paper “The Royal Road to Where?” Michael Robbins names a unique process which he calls “primordial mental activity,” which he considers different from thought, but just as important. He offers five categories of the relationship of dreaming to thought. The first is that dreaming reflects a mental process qualitatively different from thought, a view shared by Freud and Klein, and Jung as well. The second is that the dreaming process is an aspect of the thoughtful mind of either analyst or analysand. Robbins continues by showing how Freud, as well as some post-Kleinians and Bion, view dreaming both as thought and as a qualitatively different activity. Robbins’ view is that a dream is an experience that is “rendered into representational thought and language,” so that we can process and talk about it.

Robbins views Bion and Matte Blanco in camps by themselves, in their emphasis upon qualitatively different kinds of dreams corresponding to psychotic and nonpsychotic parts of the personality. Symmetrical and asymmetrical logic, both of which are found in dreams, are combined in a tridentine structure, “a differentiated three-dimensional way of thinking.” Robbins faults both Freud and Klein for their belief that all dreaming is
pathological, referring to Freud’s idea about primary process and Klein’s “phantasy” and the paranoid/schizoid position. Robbins points out that Freud explicitly states “a dream then is a psychosis . . .”

Jung and Matte Blanco, on the other hand, do not view dreams as pathological. Robbins’ contention is that dreaming is an instance of normal primordial mental activity (PMA) which occurs in waking as well as sleeping and is the predominant mental process in spiritual cultures, as well as in psychosis and certain kinds of creativity. He goes on to list all the characteristics that distinguish PMA from thought. It is affect-driven rather than sensory-perception activated, without integrated logical causality. PMA is not symbolic, but is given meaning by the “thoughtful capacities of the dream interpreter.” I think this is indeed a valuable and profound insight. It makes the distinction between being in the dream and insights about the dream. Robbins asserts that neurobiology supports the idea that dreaming is qualitatively distinct from symbolic thought.

In a postscript written three years later, Robbins answers the question in the title “The Royal Road to Where?” “Dreaming is not a ‘road’ to somewhere or something else that had been hidden. Primordial consciousness is right there in front of us to be seen—a direct instance of an important way the mind works.” He feels that it is reliable for a “wide variety of waking human phenomena,” which I hope Robbins will elaborate in detail in subsequent communications. (Robbins, 2004, JAPA 52, pp. 355-384).

I will address the first paper last. It is “Dreams and Delusion: A Conversation by George E. Atwood.” It is an imagined dialogue between a graduate student and the author. He describes a dream told to him by his patient. Atwood believes dreams are autobiographical microcosms “symbolizing this and that aspect of the subjective life of
the dreamer.” This is different from the views of other contributors in this volume, who do not believe dreams symbolize anything. He then proceeded, without asking for associations or entering into the visual experience of the dream, to tell his patient what he thought the dream meant. It is a “metaphorical account of his emotional history.” And then, as the treatment unfolded, Atwood was able to help his patient access the history of the events referred to in the dream.

Atwood responded to the dream by telling the dreamer what he thought it meant, without any effort to get at the patient’s associations or day residue. He claims the dream to be a metaphorical account of the patient’s erotic history, including important traumatic experiences in the patient’s past. Atwood writes that associations can help in locating the context of the experience to which the dream belongs, but often the associations are misleading. Atwood implies that the subsequent unfolding of the analysis substantiated his initial speculation. But I think that even if the analyst is correct, there is a problem with this approach. The analyst is experienced as an authority figure, who knows more about the patient’s dynamics than the patient can learn. Thus this approach deprives the patient of a sense of participation and mastery in both process and treatment.

Atwood’s approach to the second dream is similar. He tells the patient what he thinks the dream means. Atwood writes “Dreams capture something that is incomplete in one’s conscious life.” I think most would agree with this statement, but it is also necessary to consider the transference implications of how this is conveyed to the patient in a specific context. Atwood feels that dreams are attempts to resolve subjective tensions, including tensions that involve unfulfilled wishes. I would put it differently, namely that dreams are an effort to deal with conflicts that stem from a wish/guilt
dynamic, and contain a compromise formation in which wishes are fulfilled and punishment is executed. This, in other terms, involves an id-superego dynamic mediated by the ego. In concluding this section, Atwood emphasizes the creativity of dreaming, with which I very much agree.

It is clear from all these varying approaches that, as Shakespeare observes in *The Tempest*, “We are such stuff as dreams are made on., and our little life is rounded with a sleep.”