

## Subjective and Objective: The Two Faces of Dream Experiences

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(Accepted August 2025)

### Abstract

In this paper, I examine the relationship between subjective and objective experiences in dreams, highlighting their psychological and philosophical significance. Dreams act as a space where personal emotions and universal symbols intersect, offering insights into human consciousness. Historical perspectives- from ancient traditions to Freudian and Jungian theories- inform our understanding of dreams' meanings. Subjective elements reveal the dreamer's inner world, while objective aspects reflect shared symbols and archetypes, hinting at a collective unconscious. This dynamic reveals internal conflicts and moments of clarity, bearing therapeutic and existential relevance. Drawing from psychology, neuroscience, philosophy, and cultural studies, the paper explores how dreams bridge personal identity and universal human experience, deepening our understanding of consciousness and reality.

**Keywords:** Consciousness, Dreams, Objective elements, Psychoanalysis, Subjective experiences.

### [SUBJETIVO E OBJETIVO: AS DUAS FACES DAS EXPERIÊNCIAS ONÍRICAS]

### Resumo

Neste artigo, examino a relação entre experiências subjetivas e objetivas nos sonhos, destacando seu significado psicológico e filosófico. Os sonhos atuam como um espaço onde emoções pessoais e símbolos universais se cruzam, oferecendo insights sobre a consciência humana. Perspectivas históricas – desde tradições antigas até as teorias freudiana e junguiana – informam nossa compreensão dos significados dos sonhos. Elementos subjetivos revelam o mundo interior do sonhador, enquanto aspectos objetivos refletem símbolos e arquétipos compartilhados, sugerindo um inconsciente coletivo. Essa dinâmica revela conflitos internos e momentos de clareza, com relevância terapêutica e existencial. Com base na psicologia, neurociência, filosofia e estudos culturais, o artigo explora como os sonhos conectam a identidade pessoal e a experiência humana universal, aprofundando nossa compreensão da consciência e da realidade.

**Palavras-chave:** Consciência, Sonhos, Elementos objetivos, Psicanálise, Experiências subjetivas.

## Introduction

Dreams have captivated human curiosity across cultures and epochs, serving as portals to the subconscious mind and mirrors of cultural beliefs. Throughout history, interpretations of dreams have evolved, from ancient civilizations attributing divine messages to dreams, such as in Ancient Egypt, where dreams shaped religious practices and societal norms (Bulkeley, 2008, p. 5), to Greek philosophers like Aristotle viewing dreams as reflections of daily life experiences and mental processes during sleep (Bulkeley, 2008, p. 6). The Middle Ages interpreted dreams through a religious lens, offering moral guidance and spiritual insights (Kruger, 1992, p. 10), while the Renaissance and Enlightenment periods saw dreams explored through scientific inquiry, such as Descartes delving into their physiological and psychological underpinnings (Dodds, 2004).

In this paper, I aim to explore the evolution of dream interpretation, emphasizing subjective experiences shaped by personal emotions, memories, and cognitive processes alongside the objective elements of universal symbols and archetypes that underscore their role in understanding the human psyche and fostering individual growth. This paper argues that dreams represent a dynamic relationship between subjective experiences, shaped by individual emotions, memories, and psychological states, and objective elements such as universal symbols and archetypes rooted in the collective unconscious. Through examination of the convergence of personal and transpersonal dimensions within dream narratives, the study contends that dreams offer vital insights into the nature of consciousness, identity, and existential meaning. The central research question guiding this inquiry is: *How do subjective and objective elements in dreams interact to reveal deeper psychological and philosophical truths about the self and human experience?*

## 1. The Nature of Dreams

### 1.1. Historical Perspectives on Dreams

Dreams have played a significant role in shaping human history and culture, often being viewed as supernatural phenomena with profound implications. In ancient civilizations, dreams were commonly regarded as divine messages or prophecies. For instance, the ancient Egyptians believed that dreams were communications from the gods, a belief that profoundly influenced their culture and religious practices. They considered dreams to be a medium through which the divine realm imparted wisdom and guidance to the dreamer (Bulkeley, 2008, p. 6).

The Greeks also emphasized dreams greatly, but their interpretations were more varied. Influenced by early thinkers like Hippocrates and Aristotle, the Greeks often saw dreams as reflections of bodily states and emotional experiences. Hippocrates suggested that dreams could diagnose illnesses by revealing imbalances in the body's humours, while Aristotle believed dreams resulted from sensory impressions and mental activities continuing during sleep (Bulkeley, 2008, p. 6). Despite these naturalistic explanations, many Greeks still attributed prophetic significance to dreams, considering them as omens or messages from the gods. During the Middle Ages, the interpretation of dreams took on a distinctly religious character, influenced by Christian doctrine. Dreams were

often seen as moral or spiritual guidance, providing divine insights or warnings. This period also saw the development of dream manuals and guides that aimed to decode the symbolic language of dreams, revealing their supposed divine messages (Kruger, 1992, p. 10).

The Renaissance and Enlightenment periods marked a significant shift in understanding dreams. With the rise of scientific inquiry and the decline of religious authority, dreams began to be interpreted through more psychological and empirical lenses. Renaissance thinkers like Leonardo da Vinci and Descartes explored the nature of dreams from a philosophical and physiological perspective, setting the stage for modern dream theories. However, from the Enlightenment, the focus had largely shifted to understanding dreams as natural phenomena that could be studied and explained through reason and observation rather than divine intervention (Dodds, 2004, p. 2). These historical perspectives underscore the evolving nature of dream interpretation, reflecting broader cultural, religious, and scientific shifts. They provide a foundation for contemporary understandings of dreams, illustrating how interpretations have transitioned from supernatural to psychological frameworks.

## 1.2. Modern Theories on Dreams

The advent of psychoanalysis in the late 19th and early 20th centuries revolutionized the study of dreams, providing a psychological framework for understanding their meanings and functions. Sigmund Freud's ground-breaking work, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, proposed that dreams are manifestations of repressed desires and unconscious conflicts. Freud believed that the content of dreams is shaped by unconscious wishes that are disguised through symbolic language to make them more acceptable to the conscious mind. This process, known as dream work, involves mechanisms such as condensation, displacement, and symbolization (Freud, 2010, p. 43).

Carl Jung, a contemporary of Freud, introduced the concept of the collective unconscious, positing that dreams are influenced by universal symbols and archetypes shared by all humans. Jung's approach emphasized dreams' integrative and healing potential, viewing them as pathways to self-discovery and individuation. He argued that dreams reveal aspects of the unconscious mind and provide insights into the dreamer's psychological state. Jungian dream analysis focuses on interpreting these symbols and archetypes to understand the underlying messages of dreams (Jung, 1969).

In addition to psychoanalytic theories, modern dream research has expanded to include various psychological, neurobiological, and cognitive approaches. One prominent theory is the activation-synthesis hypothesis, proposed by J. Allan Hobson and Robert McCarley. This hypothesis suggests that dreams result from the brain's attempt to make sense of random neural activity during sleep. According to this view, the brain synthesizes and interprets this activity to create a coherent narrative, resulting in dreams' bizarre and fragmented nature (Hobson and McCarley, 1977, p. 1336).

Another significant theory is the continuity hypothesis, which posits that dreams reflect the dreamer's waking life experiences, emotions, and concerns. This approach suggests that there is a continuity between waking and dreaming cognition, with dreams often mirroring the individual's current thoughts, worries, and emotional states (Domhoff, 2003, p. 10). Studies supporting this hypothesis have shown that people who experience significant stress or trauma are more likely to have dreams that reflect these experiences, indicating a direct connection between waking life and dream content.

### 1.3. Types of Dreams and Their Characteristics

Dreams can be categorized into several types, each with distinct characteristics and implications for understanding the subconscious mind and psychological health. These categories include lucid dreams, nightmares, recurring dreams, and prophetic dreams.

**Lucid Dreams:** In lucid dreams, the dreamer becomes aware that they are dreaming and may even gain some control over the dream narrative. This heightened awareness can lead to increased creativity, problem-solving abilities, and emotional insight. Lucid dreaming has been extensively studied by researchers like Stephen LaBerge, who highlighted its potential therapeutic benefits and its ability to enhance personal development (LaBerge, 1985, p. 1). Techniques such as reality testing and mnemonic induction have been developed to help individuals achieve and maintain lucidity in their dreams.

**Nightmares:** Nightmares are distressing dreams that evoke strong feelings of fear, anxiety, or sadness. They often reflect unresolved conflicts, traumas, or significant stressors in the dreamer's life. Repeated exposure to nightmares can significantly impact an individual's emotional well-being and sleep quality. Ernest Hartmann's research emphasizes the role of nightmares in processing emotional experiences and integrating them into the individual's broader psychological framework (Hartmann, 2010). Therapeutic approaches, such as imagery rehearsal therapy, have been developed to help individuals cope with and reduce the frequency of nightmares.

**Recurring Dreams:** Recurring dreams involve repetitive themes, scenarios, or events and may indicate persistent concerns or unresolved issues in the dreamer's life. These dreams often reflect ongoing psychological patterns and can provide valuable insights into the individual's subconscious mind. Analyzing recurring dreams can reveal underlying fears, desires, or conflicts that the dreamer may need to address. Studies by Antonio Zadra and Sylvain Desjardins have shown that recurring dreams often correlate with significant life stressors or unresolved emotional issues, suggesting their importance in psychological self-assessment and therapy (Zadra and Desjardins, 2006).

**Prophetic Dreams:** Also known as precognitive dreams, these dreams are believed to foretell future events. While often regarded with skepticism within the scientific community, some anecdotal evidence and case studies suggest that certain dreams may indeed have predictive elements. Kelly Bulkeley's research explores prophetic dreams' historical and cultural significance, highlighting how they have been interpreted and valued in various societies (Bulkeley, 2008, p. 33). While the mechanisms behind such dreams remain unclear, they continue to intrigue both researchers and the general public.

## 2. Subjective Experiences in Dreams

### 2.1. Personal and Internal Experiences

Subjective experiences in dreams encompass the dream state's deeply personal and internal aspects, shaped by the dreamer's emotions, thoughts, and memories. These experiences often reflect the dreamer's waking life concerns and psychological state, providing insights into their inner world. The dreamer's sense of self, or ego, plays a central role in shaping these experiences, as it navigates and interprets the dream's content.

The subjective nature of dreams means that they are highly individualized, with each dreamer's experiences being unique to their personal history and emotional landscape. For example, a person experiencing anxiety about an upcoming presentation may dream of standing in front of an audience and forgetting their lines. This type of dream vividly illustrates the dreamer's internal fears and insecurities, directly reflecting their emotional state. Such dreams can serve as a psychological mirror, revealing the subconscious worries that might not be fully acknowledged during waking hours (Hartmann, 2010, p. 4).

Emotions play a significant role in the subjective experiences of dreams. Research has shown that the emotional tone of a dream can often be traced back to the dreamer's waking life experiences and emotional well-being. For instance, people who are experiencing high levels of stress or anxiety are more likely to have dreams that reflect these negative emotions. These dreams can be intense and vivid, often leaving a lasting impression upon waking (Domhoff, 2003, p. 47). Conversely, positive emotions experienced during waking life can manifest in dreams, creating pleasant and uplifting experiences.

Memories also contribute to the subjective nature of dreams. Dreams often incorporate fragments of past experiences, weaving them into the dream narrative in ways that might not always be immediately recognizable. This process of memory incorporation is believed to play a role in memory consolidation, where the brain processes and integrates new information acquired during waking hours (Stickgold et al. 2001, p. 1054). For example, a person who recently visited a new city might dream of exploring a fantastical version of that city, blending real memories with imaginative elements.

The dreamer's sense of self, or ego, is crucial in shaping subjective dream experiences. The ego navigates the dream landscape, interpreting and reacting to the various scenarios that unfold. This sense of self can be fluid in dreams, sometimes maintaining continuity with the waking self and at other times adopting entirely different identities or perspectives. The flexibility of the dream ego allows for a wide range of subjective experiences, from reliving past events to exploring entirely novel situations (Freud, 2010). Understanding subjective experiences in dreams can provide valuable insights into the dreamer's psychological state. By analyzing the emotions, thoughts, and memories that surface in dreams, individuals can better understand their subconscious mind and address unresolved issues or conflicts. Therapists often use dream analysis as a tool to help clients explore their inner world and uncover hidden aspects of their psyche (Hill, 2004, p. 67).

## **2.2. Emotional and Cognitive Aspects**

Dreams are rich with emotional and cognitive content, often intensifying the dreamer's waking life feelings and thoughts. The emotions experienced in dreams can be intense and varied, ranging from joy and love to fear and sadness. These emotional experiences can provide valuable insights into the dreamer's psychological well-being and subconscious mind. Emotionally, dreams serve as a mirror to the dreamer's inner world, reflecting their current emotional state and unresolved feelings. For instance, someone dealing with grief might dream of lost loved ones, experiencing both the sorrow of their absence and the joy of their presence within the dream. These emotional narratives can help process complex feelings, offering a therapeutic outlet that contributes to emotional regulation and mental health (Hartmann, 2010, p. 56). During REM sleep, vivid emotional experiences in dreams are often linked to the activation of brain regions

involved in emotion processing, such as the amygdala and the limbic system (Nir & Tononi, 2010, p. 90).

Cognitively, dreams encompass problem-solving, creativity, and memory processing. The brain demonstrates remarkable cognitive flexibility during dreams, particularly in REM sleep. This is evidenced by the ability to think outside the box and come up with creative and unconventional solutions to problems. Such cognitive flexibility during dreaming can lead to innovative ideas and breakthroughs in both personal and professional contexts. For example, the discovery of the benzene ring structure by August Kekulé, inspired by a dream of a snake biting its own tail, is a classic illustration of dream-induced creativity (Stickgold et al. 2001). Memory processing is another critical cognitive function of dreams. The brain replays and reprocesses experiences from waking life during sleep, which aids in consolidating and integrating new memories. This process helps reinforce learning and allows for the emotional and cognitive aspects of memories to be integrated, promoting better understanding and retention of new information (Stickgold & Walker, 2007, p. 467).

### **2.3. Case Studies and Examples**

Case studies offer valuable insights into the subjective nature of dreams, providing detailed accounts of how dreams reflect and influence an individual's psychological state. Two notable examples are the study of 'post-traumatic stress disorder' (PTSD) and its impact on dreams and the examination of the dreams of artists. Individuals with PTSD often experience vivid and distressing dreams that replay traumatic events, reflecting their unresolved trauma and emotional turmoil. These recurrent nightmares are a hallmark symptom of PTSD and can significantly impact the sufferer's sleep quality and overall well-being. A comprehensive study was conducted on PTSD patients, highlighting how these traumatic dreams serve as a means for the subconscious mind to process and cope with traumatic experiences. The dreams are often exact or distorted replays of the traumatic events, underscoring the intensity and persistence of the individual's emotional distress. Understanding these dreams can be crucial for developing therapeutic interventions, such as imagery rehearsal therapy, which aims to modify the distressing dream content and reduce the frequency of nightmares.

Another fascinating case study examined the dreams of artists and found that their dreams frequently featured creative problem-solving and inspiration for their work. These dreams often included vivid imagery, symbolic elements, and narrative structures that influenced their artistic creations. Bulkeley (2008) explored how artists like Salvador Dalí and William Blake used their dream experiences as a source of artistic inspiration. Dalí's 'paranoiac-critical method,' for instance, involved deliberately inducing hallucinatory states to access the subconscious mind's creative potential. This study illustrates how dreams can be a rich source of creativity, providing artists with unique ideas and perspectives that inform their work. These case studies highlight the profound and varied ways in which dreams can reflect an individual's inner world. In the context of PTSD, dreams serve as a window into the unresolved trauma and emotional struggles of the individual, while for artists, dreams are a wellspring of creativity and inspiration.

## **3. Objective Experiences in Dreams**

### **3.1. External and Shared Elements**

Objective experiences in dreams refer to the external and shared elements that transcend individual subjectivity, encompassing symbolism, archetypes, and cultural motifs that

consistently appear across different dreamers. These elements offer a glimpse into the collective aspects of the human psyche, revealing universal themes and patterns that span cultures and historical periods. Carl Jung's concept of the collective unconscious provides a foundational framework for understanding these shared dream elements, suggesting that certain symbols and archetypes are innate and universally recognized (Jung, 1969).

Jung proposed that the collective unconscious is composed of archetypes, which are primordial images and symbols that emerge in the dreams and myths of all cultures. These archetypes include figures such as the 'Hero, the Mother, and the Shadow,' each representing fundamental aspects of the human experience. For instance, the archetype of the Hero often appears in dreams as a figure embarking on a journey or quest, symbolizing the dreamer's personal growth and self-discovery. Similarly, the Mother archetype might appear as a nurturing figure, reflecting the dreamer's need for care and protection.

One common symbol that appears in dreams across cultures is water. Water is frequently associated with emotions and the unconscious mind. In many traditions, water represents the flow of life and the depths of the psyche. For example, dreaming of calm, clear water might indicate a state of emotional tranquillity, while turbulent water could signify emotional turmoil or conflict. This symbolism is reflected in various cultural narratives and religious texts, where water often plays a significant role in representing spiritual cleansing and emotional purification (Hall, 1953, p. 35).

Another prevalent symbol in dreams is the act of flying. Flying in dreams is commonly associated with themes of freedom, transcendence, and escape from the constraints of everyday life. It can reflect the dreamer's desire to rise above challenges or explore new possibilities. Whether joyful or anxiety-inducing, the sensation of flying taps into a universal human longing for liberation and exploration. This symbol is not limited to any specific culture or time period.

Moreover, these shared symbols and themes can serve as a bridge between individuals and cultures, fostering a greater understanding of the universal aspects of human experience. They highlight the interconnectedness of all people through the shared language of dreams. By acknowledging these common elements, therapists and dream analysts can better interpret the significance of dreams, offering more profound and culturally sensitive insights into the dreamer's inner world (Hillman, 1979). Objective experiences in dreams encompass universal symbols and archetypes that transcend individual subjectivity. Carl Jung's concept of the collective unconscious provides a framework for understanding these shared elements, which appear consistently in the dreams of people from diverse cultures. Symbols like water and flying reflect common psychological and cultural patterns, revealing the interconnectedness of the human experience.

### **3.2. Symbolism and Archetypes**

Symbolism in dreams can be deeply meaningful, providing valuable insights into the dreamer's psyche. Symbols in dreams often represent abstract concepts or unconscious thoughts that the dreamer may not be fully aware of. These symbols act as a bridge between the conscious and unconscious mind, revealing hidden aspects of the self that can be explored and understood.

For instance, a house in a dream is a common symbol that can represent the self. Different rooms within the house may symbolize various aspects of the dreamer's personality or life experiences. For example, the basement might represent the subconscious mind or repressed memories, while the attic could symbolize higher thinking or aspirations. The condition and layout of the house can also provide clues about the dreamer's emotional state and self-perception. A well-kept, spacious house might indicate a balanced and healthy self-image, whereas a neglected or cluttered house could suggest unresolved issues or emotional turmoil (Hall, 1953, p. 34).

Jung's concept of archetypes adds another layer of depth to the interpretation of dream symbols. Archetypes are universal symbols and themes that recur across different cultures and historical periods, reflecting fundamental human experiences and psychological patterns. Jung identified several key archetypes that frequently appear in dreams, each representing different aspects of the human psyche. One of the most prominent archetypes is the Hero, symbolizing the individual's journey towards self-discovery and personal growth. The Hero's journey often involves overcoming obstacles and facing challenges, reflecting the dreamer's inner struggles and aspirations. The Shadow archetype represents the darker, unconscious parts of the self that are often repressed or denied. Confronting the Shadow in dreams can lead to greater self-awareness and psychological integration (Jung, 1969).

Other common archetypes include the Anima/Animus, representing each individual's feminine and masculine aspects, and the Wise Old Man, symbolizing wisdom and guidance. These archetypes can reveal underlying psychological dynamics and developmental stages, providing a roadmap for personal growth and self-understanding. For example, encountering the 'Wise Old Man' in a dream might suggest that the dreamer is seeking guidance or insight during a period of transition or uncertainty (Jung, 1969).

### **3.3. Case Studies and Examples**

Case studies provide concrete examples of objective elements in dreams, revealing how certain symbols and themes recur across different cultures and age groups. These universal elements suggest that some aspects of the dream experience are shared across humanity, transcending individual subjectivity.

One notable study conducted by G. William Domhoff analyzed the dreams of individuals from various cultural backgrounds. This study found recurring symbols and themes such as journeys, battles, and transformations. These motifs appeared consistently, regardless of the dreamers' cultural or personal backgrounds, indicating that certain elements of the dream experience are universally shared. For example, dreams involving journeys often symbolized personal growth or life transitions, while battles represented internal conflicts or struggles. Transformations in dreams typically reflect changes in the dreamer's self-perception or life circumstances (Domhoff, 2003, p. 78). These findings support the idea that dream symbols and themes are not merely personal but are part of a broader, collective experience.

Another insightful study by Bulkeley (2008) examined children's dreams, revealing that their dreams often featured archetypal themes such as the hero's journey and encounters with mythical creatures. This study underscores that certain symbols and motifs are deeply embedded in the human psyche from an early age. For instance, children's dreams frequently involved scenarios where they played the role of a hero, embarking on adventures and overcoming obstacles. These dreams align with Carl

Jung's concept of the Hero archetype, suggesting that even at a young age, individuals are attuned to these universal themes (Bulkeley, 2008). Encounters with mythical creatures in children's dreams also reflect archetypal symbols, representing fears, desires, and the exploration of the unknown.

These case studies highlight the presence of objective elements in dreams, demonstrating that certain symbols and themes are shared across different cultures and age groups.

#### **4. Dialogue between Subjective and Objective in Dreams**

##### **4.1. Interaction and Conflict**

Subjective experiences in dreams are shaped by the dreamer's emotions, thoughts, and memories. These elements are unique to the individual and reflect their waking life concerns and psychological state. For instance, a person who is anxious about an upcoming job interview might dream of being unprepared or judged, mirroring their real-life fears and insecurities. These subjective experiences provide a window into the dreamer's internal world, highlighting their emotional struggles and cognitive processes.

On the other hand, objective experiences in dreams involve universal symbols and archetypes that transcend individual subjectivity. These elements, as discussed by Carl Jung, are part of the collective unconscious and appear consistently across different cultures and historical periods. Symbols such as water, representing emotions and the unconscious, or the act of flying, symbolizing freedom and transcendence, are examples of these universal motifs (Jung, 1969). These objective elements provide a common language through which the collective human experience can be understood and explored.

The dynamic relationship between subjective and objective experiences in dreams can lead to complex narratives that reflect the dreamer's psychological state. For example, consider a dreamer who experiences a conflict between their desire for freedom, symbolized by flying, and their fear of the unknown, symbolized by darkness. This conflict represents a dialogue between the dreamer's emotions and the universal symbols that shape the dream narrative. The dreamer's desire to fly might indicate a longing for liberation and escape from life's constraints, while the darkness represents the fear and uncertainty that accompany such aspirations.

This interaction can lead to various outcomes within the dream. The dreamer might find a resolution by overcoming their fear and soaring through the darkness, symbolizing a breakthrough in their waking life struggles. Alternatively, the dream might end in unresolved tension, reflecting ongoing internal conflicts that need further exploration and understanding. These dream narratives provide valuable insights into the dreamer's psychological state, revealing underlying fears, desires, and potential paths for personal growth.

Research supports the significance of this relationship between subjective and objective experiences in dreams. For instance, studies have shown that dreams often incorporate personal concerns and archetypal themes, creating a rich tapestry of meaning that reflects the frequently combined personal elements with universal symbols, suggesting that the dreamer's psyche actively engages with individual and

collective dimensions of experience. Understanding the interaction between subjective and objective experiences in dreams can enhance the therapeutic use of dream analysis.

## **4.2. Integration and Resolution**

Dreams provide a unique arena where the integration and resolution of subjective and objective elements can profoundly impact personal growth and self-awareness. Through dreams, individuals confront subconscious conflicts and emotions that may not be fully accessible in waking life. This confrontation often leads to insights that facilitate emotional healing and psychological integration. Gestalt psychology offers a framework to understand this process by emphasizing the holistic nature of perception and experience. According to Gestalt principles, dreams are not mere random collections of images but coherent wholes where various elements merge to form meaningful narratives (Perls, 1973). In dreams, disparate elements from our conscious and unconscious minds combine, reflecting underlying psychological states and conflicts. By experiencing these elements in a unified dream narrative, individuals can better understand their inner selves and the issues they face.

As articulated by philosophers like Jean-Paul Sartre and Maurice Merleau-Ponty, existential phenomenology further enriches our understanding of dream integration. Sartre (1956) posited that dreams reveal the interplay between subjective consciousness and the external world, illustrating how our perceptions and interpretations shape our reality. In Sartrean terms, dreams manifest as subjective experiences where the dreamer's consciousness actively engages with and interprets the dream content. Merleau-Ponty (1962), on the other hand, explored how bodily experiences and perceptions intertwine with our sense of self and reality, suggesting that dreams are embodied experiences that reflect our lived existence.

Through the theoretical lenses of Gestalt psychology and existential phenomenology, dreams emerge as profound tools for self-discovery and integration. Individuals can uncover hidden desires, fears, and unresolved conflicts by analysing dream narratives and reflecting on their symbolic content. This process promotes emotional healing and fosters a deeper connection between one's conscious and unconscious mind. Ultimately, the integration of subjective and objective elements in dreams offers a pathway to enhanced self-awareness and personal growth, illuminating the complexities of human experience beyond waking consciousness.

## **5. Implications of Subjective-Objective Dialogue in Dreams**

### **5.1. Psychological and Therapeutic Implications**

Dream therapy, an approach that utilizes the analysis of dreams within a therapeutic framework, offers profound insights into the unconscious mind and can be instrumental in promoting emotional healing and self-discovery. In therapy, dreams are viewed as symbolic expressions of the unconscious, reflecting both personal experiences and universal archetypes (Jung, 1969). Through careful analysis, therapists assist clients in deciphering the layers of meaning within their dreams, uncovering repressed emotions, fears, and desires that may be influencing their waking behaviours and emotions (Hill, 2004). For example, a recurring dream of being chased could symbolize feelings of anxiety or avoidance in waking life, prompting exploration into underlying stressors or unresolved conflicts. By integrating the subjective elements of the dream- such as emotions, personal experiences, and perceptions- with objective elements- such as

universal symbols or cultural motifs- therapists help clients better understand themselves and their psychological processes (Jung, 1969).

Moreover, the therapeutic process of dream analysis fosters a collaborative relationship between therapist and client, where interpretations are co-constructed to ensure relevance and accuracy to the client's unique experiences (Perls,1973). This approach enhances self-awareness and empowers clients to explore and confront difficult emotions in a supportive environment. Research underscores the efficacy of dream therapy in facilitating psychological healing and personal growth (Hill, 2004).

## 5.2. Philosophical and Existential Implications

Existential philosophers such as Jean-Paul Sartre and Maurice Merleau-Ponty offer profound insights into the nature of reality and the self, particularly through the lens of subjective and objective experiences. Sartre's existential framework, articulated in *Being and Nothingness*, introduces the concepts of being-for-itself (consciousness) and being-in-itself (the objective world). These concepts illuminate how dreams challenge conventional reality by blurring the boundaries between subjective consciousness and the external, objective world (Sartre, 1956).

In dreams, the fluidity between being for itself and being in itself becomes apparent as individuals experience a reality where subjective thoughts and perceptions construct environments that lack the typical constraints of physical laws or objective coherence. This fluidity suggests that our consciousness in dreams is not bound by the same limitations as waking consciousness, allowing for a malleable perception of reality and selfhood (Sartre, 1956).

Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological perspective further enriches this exploration by emphasizing the embodied experience of perception. *Phenomenology of Perception* underscores how our bodily interactions with the world shape our understanding of reality. The body's role can be altered in dreams, enabling experiences where physical limitations and boundaries are transcended. This shift challenges our understanding of embodied existence and suggests that our consciousness, even in dreams, remains deeply intertwined with our bodily experiences and perceptions (Merleau-Ponty, 1962).

The subjective-objective dialogue inherent in dreams raises profound existential questions about identity and the continuity of the self. Dreams often blend personal experiences with universal archetypes, suggesting a shared reservoir of symbols and meanings that transcend individual consciousness. This phenomenon prompts us to reconsider the boundaries of personal identity- 'Are we distinct individuals with unique subjective experiences, or are we part of a broader, collective consciousness that draws upon shared symbols and narratives?'

These questions invite philosophical reflection on the nature of selfhood and the implications of consciousness. If dreams reveal a realm where personal and universal elements converge, they challenge the notion of a purely isolated or autonomous self. Instead, they suggest that our identities may be dynamically shaped by both personal experiences and collective influences, reflecting a complex interplay between subjective interpretation and objective realities (Jung, 1969).

## Final Remarks

To sum up, studying subjective and objective dialogue in dreams offers a rich and multifaceted exploration of the human mind and consciousness. Through examining the relationship between personal emotions and universal symbols, we can gain deeper insights into our dreams and their significance. Integrating subjective and objective elements in dreams reflects the complex nature of our psychological and existential experiences, challenging our conventional notions of reality and the self. Dreams provide a unique window into the depths of the human psyche, revealing the intricate dance between our individual consciousness and the collective unconscious. Understanding this dialogue can have profound implications for psychology, therapy, philosophy, and beyond, offering valuable tools for personal growth and self-awareness.

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