

the agent of cunning ruses, which it is the task of the patient, aided by the analyst, to decipher. The dream language, according to Freud, is a language of distortion, and it is so because the unconscious wishes to repress material, which in effect means to hide material from the conscious mind. For Ricoeur, meanwhile, as we have seen in his

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Freud's first major work, and arguably his most significant, was *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1899). Here Freud explains dreams as a kind of symbolism, a series of 'rebus'. A rebus is a picture puzzle requiring a double work of translation: first from one code to another, and then within the second code. Hence, for example, a beer advertisement in the 1970s showed an enormous shin with a ladder up it, adjacent to a tin can. The first translation is from pictorial code to linguistic: 'high knee can'. The second translation is within the linguistic code: 'Heineken'. In dreaming, the 'dream work' performs this work of interpretation in reverse, in order to hide, or repress, the truth from the conscious mind. The truth, or real meaning, is unconscious.

In subsequent works Freud goes on to explain that the reason this material is repressed is that it is always at heart sexual, and derives from the answer to the child's question 'Where did I come from?', which is found in the 'primal scene', the real or (usually) imagined image of parental intercourse. Becoming aware, for the child, means becoming aware that he is not the only object of his mother's affections; his true desire is to displace the father in order to regain his 'rightful' place. This complex (called the 'Oedipus' complex after the character in Sophocles' play, who kills his father and marries his mother) is seen by Freud as determining the whole of human existence: most people successfully reconcile themselves to it, but the neurotic has failed to complete this work of reconciliation.

In later works still (especially in his *New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*, 1932), Freud develops a 'topography' of the psyche, in three parts: the id, the Ego and the super-ego. The id is what in the earlier work used to be called 'unconscious'; it is the unadulterated collection of primitive desires that have been forgotten by the conscious mind because they are repressed. The Ego is the conscious mind, sandwiched between the id and the super-ego. The super-ego is the conscience, which acts as a brake on the Ego by doing the work of repressing the id. Occasionally the id will out, however, as it does in dreams, jokes or flashes of wit.

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