

24 Sleeping, Dreaming and Their Thresholds: A Husserlian Account

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Abstract: The question of sleeping and dreaming faces particular difficulties for phenomenological analysis. Access to sleep is granted only by means of its thresholds, that is, falling asleep and awakening, and dreams can be disclosed either through recollection or by drawing on third-person accounts. This paper aims to present these phenomena, first, discussing the possibility of analyzing dreams. Second, referring to the thresholds of sleep. Third, considering dreamless sleep in connection with the unconscious and affection. And fourth, examining the main features of the experience of dreaming. A final section will discuss what kind of intentional achievement dreaming is.

Keywords: Husserl; Unconscious; Passivity; Sleep; Sleeping; Dream; Dreaming

1 The Possibility of Analyzing Dreams

The question of sleeping and dreaming faces very particular difficulties for phenomenological analysis. Unlike other phenomena, we do not have direct but only indirect access to it, largely by means of recollection. And even the latter is a very particular case since it is essential for a recollection to be a presentification of some event that has already been lived by *conscious* life. Now it is distinctive of dreams that they are *never* lived in that way, for they occur in that *unconscious* state that is called sleep. This poses a problem for phenomenological analysis since access to the unconscious cannot be granted in advance as is the case with other phenomena: we cannot simply turn the gaze reflectively to what is already there or to an imaginary variation of it. Thus, it must first be shown that such an access is possible, and in the phenomenological discussion, opinions have often been contrary to such a claim. On the one side, Husserl himself and some of his close disciples, notably Eugen Fink, Jean Hering and Theodor Conrad, support the affirmative view. On the other side, Jean-Luc Nancy and Dieter Lohmar among others argue against it.

But if we take a step back in our investigation, we can see that the root question involving the problem of dreams lies in the very notion of the *unconscious*. The unconscious is an opaque dimension of intentionality, one which Husserl predominantly discusses in the context of genetic analysis. As we shall see later, it bears a close relation to the question of affection. But to begin with, it is important to note that Husserl's usage of the term "unconscious" is not univocal since it may refer to two different but connected phenomena. On the one hand, it refers to passivity as the background of the I's wakeful activity. On the other, it refers to the dominion of

sleep and dream, which goes beyond the limits of the wakeful I. Although we shall focus mainly on the second sense, the question of affection has been elaborated by Husserl almost exclusively in his analyses of the role passivity plays in the subject's wakeful life. It is also noteworthy that, for the most part, Husserl employs words like "sleep", "dream", "wakeful(ness)", "awakening", etc. in a metaphorical sense. Scattered throughout his manuscripts, he provides, however, some relatively detailed analyses on dreamless sleep and, occasionally, brief remarks on the topic of the thresholds of dreaming, that is, falling asleep and awakening. It is in these connections that he deals with the issue of the unconscious.

As we said, Husserl does not seem to question the possibility of a phenomenological analysis of dreams.¹ But it is Eugen Fink who, in his doctoral dissertation on the presentifications, first devotes a brief but acute study to dreaming.² Jean-Paul Sartre and some years later Theodor Conrad also address the topic positively. In recent years, Jean-Luc Nancy has reopened the discussion by denying in general the possibility of a phenomenology of sleep. He argues that, since sleep is the complete absence of any kind of experience, it is therefore completely unfeasible in phenomenological terms:

The sleeping *self* does not appear: it is not phenomenalized... Sleep does not authorize the analysis of any form of appearance whatsoever... There is no phenomenology of sleep, for it shows of itself only its disappearance, its burrowing and its concealment.³

Nicolas de Warren, for his part, defends the phenomenality of sleep and dreams over against Nancy,⁴ as Julia Iribarne and Hans Rainer Sepp also do. Newly, Dieter Lohmar has raised the specific question of the phenomenological status of dreams. He first points out to the irrationality of dreams, since in them "...causality is often suppressed, identity is not guaranteed, temporal order is occasionally not preserved". He then adds that dreams are difficult to understand because they are "overly multivocal and very little controllable as to offer a good field for description".⁵ Moreover, they are encrypted and therefore in need of interpretation. But on the other hand, he admits that dreams *do* bear a certain rationality in that they offer a minimum of sense as far as they are capable of presenting unitary objects, actions, motives and contexts. This is possible because in dreaming the constitution of objects and actions is governed by the same types [*Typen*] that are at play in our daytime perceptual life. And finally, the fact that dreams can be *recollected* shows that in dreaming not all

1 Although his reluctancy to treat the issue more directly may speak for a certain hesitation in this regard.

2 Eugen Fink, "Vergegenwärtigung und Bild. Beiträge zur Phänomenologie der Unwirklichkeit (1930)," in *Studien zur Phänomenologie 1930–1939* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1966). Henceforth cited as "Vergegenwärtigung". Otherwise indicated, translations are mine.

3 Jean-Luc Nancy, *Tombe de soleil* (Paris: Galilée, 2007), 31. English translation: *The Fall of Sleep*, trans. Charlotte Mandell (New York: Fordham University Press, 2009), 13.

4 Nicolas de Warren, "The Inner Night. Towards a Phenomenology of (Dreamless) Sleep," in *On Time. New Contributions to the Phenomenology of Time*, ed. Dieter Lohmar and Ichiro Yamaguchi (Dordrecht: Springer, 2010), 273–94; here 274–5.

5 Dieter Lohmar, *Phänomenologie der schwachen Phantasie* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2008), 160. Henceforth cited as *Phantasie* with page reference. Translations are mine.

functions of the I are suppressed.⁶ This is in line with Fink when he remarks that, even though we cannot have direct exhibitions [*Aufweisungen*] of dreams while reflecting upon them because we are always awake when we theorize, the very fact that we are able to recollect dreams and meaningful connections among them indirectly proves that they are *given* in some way.⁷

2 The Thresholds of Sleep

It seems to me that the phenomena of sleeping and dreaming can be addressed basically from three complementary points of view. First, by considering what is directly accessible to us, that is, the conscious *thresholds* of sleeping: falling asleep as submerging-in and awakening as emerging-from the unconscious. Second, by reflecting on the *recollection* of dreams. And third, by turning to indirect sources, which may include personal diaries, the so-called dream-books, stories gathered from literature, myths, oral traditions and so on, but also from artwork like paintings or movies. In this paper, we shall focus on the first two points of view.

In order to be able to analyze the thresholds of sleep, some preliminary methodological steps are required. Put very briefly, we have first to put intersubjective constitution into brackets, so that we may gain access to the ego's primordial experience. Then we have to focus on the living present. This is a necessary step in order to access the core of our individual egoic stream of consciousness, that is, the hyletic-kinesthetic sphere, wherein the phenomena of sleeping and dreaming lie.⁸ If we now reflect on this stream of the living present, we find that it proceeds in the form of a continuous succession of periods of wakefulness and sleep.⁹ Wakeful periods connect with one another through sleep periods, and in every wakeful period the I is simultaneously aware of its previous sleep and wakeful periods. Moreover, there are transitional phenomena announcing the beginning and the end of the different periods.¹⁰ Every single sleep period is marked out through an initial mode of falling asleep and a final mode of awakening. In a text from the C-Manuscripts, Husserl describes these phenomena as follows:

We know [the phenomenon of] 'falling asleep' and the relaxation [*Entspannung*] and impoverishment of the life of consciousness proper to it, as well as [the phenomenon of] awakening [*Aufwachen*] as a sudden having-again-a-perception-field, and more precisely as [having] a world-field....¹¹

6 Lohmar, *Phantasie*, 161.

7 Fink, "Vergegenwärtigung," 63.

8 Even more:

"This is a necessary addition and in a certain way a justification of the analyses of the living present, as far as the distinction between the hyletic core structure and the egoicalness (*Ichlichkeit*), in which temporalization occurs, must lead to an express distinction between wakefulness and sleep, or rather to the building up from wakeful and sleep periods".

(Manuscript D 14, 3).

All translations from Husserl's unpublished manuscripts are mine. I wish to thank Professor Julia Jansen, Director of the Husserl Archives in Leuven, for her kind permission to quote from Husserl's unpublished manuscripts.

9 *Hua* XXXIX, 587. Translations are mine. (Complete references to *Hua* (*Husserliana*) volumes are found in the section "References to Works by Husserl, Heidegger, and Scheler" in this issue. [Editor's note.]

10 *Hua* XXXIX, 591.

11 *Hua Mat* VIII, 418. Translations are mine.

He further connects this with the issue of the *interests* of the I. What happens in the former case is “a giving-up [*Ablassen*], a letting-fall [*Fallenlassen*] of the interests that lead me in wakeful life, a de-actualization [*Ent-Aktualisierung*]”. When we wake up, those interests resume, (re-)actualize, take up again. In a more general way, with regard to the *wakeful* life of the stream of consciousness falling asleep is an “untying of oneself”, while awakening can be described as a “coming back to oneself”.¹² Husserl makes another significant observation in this context: the *connection* between wakeful periods mediated by a sleep period is established by the work of recollection, which links up wakefulness with wakefulness in a peculiar synthesis which he describes as a “chain of recollections” [*Wiedererinnerungskette*]. In virtue of the structure of encasement [*Ineinanderschachtelung*] of intentional modifications in one another (which Husserl described in § 100 of the First Book of the *Ideas*),¹³ every wakeful period that is recollected in the now also encompasses the recollection of the earlier periods, and so on.¹⁴ Incidentally, these remarks may help to see that *sleep* is not just an accidental episode but rather a mode of human life.¹⁵

3 Dreamless Sleep and Affection

Once the thresholds of the unconscious have been outlined, the next step consists in focusing on *dreamless sleep*, which Husserl describes as an extreme limit [*äusserster Limes*] between falling asleep and awakening. In contrast with the latter and with dreaming, dreamless sleep cannot be recovered by wakeful life through reflection on recollection. Husserl characterizes it again in connection with the notion of interest as a condition of “being submerged” (or “absorbed”) [*Versunkensein*] in which the I is *totally* disconnected from its worldly interests. In this condition of having-slipped-down [*Entsunkensein*] into the unconscious, “*am not a man in the world anymore, I am not for myself the one I always am, who has experience of something, who lives, who acts...*”.¹⁶ *All this is submerged now. This condition of being-submerged is nevertheless not like sinking into nothingness, but “a mode of life itself, a flowing life closed to stimuli and yet flowing”.*¹⁷ In Manuscript D 14 Husserl accounts for *dreamless sleep* in the following manner: “*The non-conscious I [bewusstlos] is in a state of Nirvana, its will, its acting, is a give-in of its interests; nothing moves it, that is, nothing triggers its interest. In being interest-less [Interesseloses], it does not move, it does nothing, it has no experience, it sees nothing, it hears nothing, it performs no action. (...) Constitution and its achievements are not lost, but they <have fallen> into the mode of being submerged in the sense of the absence of interest [Interessenlosigkeit].*¹⁸ In a parallel manner, awakening is a change in that same flow, one in which the bodily senses open up, stimuli burst into the sense-fields and motivate a re-activation of worldly interests.¹⁹

12 *Hua Mat VIII*, 418.

13 *Hua III/1*, 236/247.

14 *Hua XXXIX*, 587.

15 *Hua XXIX*, 335.

16 *Hua Mat VIII*, 499.

17 *Hua XXIX*, 337.

18 *Hua XLII*, 14–15.

19 *Hua XXIX*, 337.

Now this metaphorical reference to letting fall, sinking down, being submerged, etc., in the process of falling asleep, as well as those correlatives to waking up, touch on a phenomenon that helps to throw light upon the description of sleep because it connects the being-conscious proper to daytime with the being-un-conscious proper to sleep. This is the phenomenon of *affection*, which Husserl once more relates closely to the notion of interest.

We may first recall some general features of this phenomenon. Affection is an intentional structure common to different constitutive strata. Husserl usually describes it employing the Kantian terms of passivity, spontaneity and receptivity. In perception, the constitution of any individual object is always a spontaneous operation, which in the lowest level consists in actively grasping [*Erfassen*] it. In turn, grasping can be either a re-activation of a former act of objectivation or an original act whereby something is objectified for the first time.²⁰ Especially in the latter case the I behaves “receptively”, that is, its interest is awakened because it is affected by something that stands out within the field of presence.²¹ If we now turn to the living present, the dimension of what is effectively present has a hyletic core in which a foreground or relief [*Relief*] and a background are distinguished.²²

The foreground comprises data or groups of data that stand out from the background and are able to “stimulate” the I so that the I may turn toward them and grasp them attentionally. We can remark in passing that in this context Husserl uses expressions like “being-awake”, to be “awake” and “awakened” in a clearly metaphorical sense, in order to indicate the transit from the I’s being affected by the data to its giving an answer to their call.²³ Affection designates this standing out from an environment that is passively present and that gives rise to an answer of the I. The prominent data in the field have an affective power on the I.²⁴ More precisely, it is

the allure given to consciousness, the peculiar pull [*Zug*] that an object given to consciousness exercises on the ego; it is a pull that is relaxed [*sich entspannt*] when the ego turns toward it attentively, and progresses from here, striving toward self-giving intuition, disclosing more and more of the self of the object.²⁵

The phenomenon of affection presupposes that hyletic data are not a formless stuff, as they were considered in the static analysis of *Ideas I*, but an intentional field endowed with a pre-objective organization, capable of setting in motion such interplay between stimulus and answer.²⁶ Genetic analysis applied to the dimension of the living present reveals a complex structure of synthetic achievements that yield the field’s unity. The first synthesis of unity concerns temporality, from which the universal formal order

20 *Hua IV*, 24/26.

21 As Husserl describes in a manuscript dated in 1921: “...as far as it belongs to the essence of the I to be referred to (*angewiesen*), to be stimulated by something alien to it (something ‘external’ in a sense proper) ...so far the subject is called ‘receptive’” (Ms. E III 2, 22a).

22 *Hua XI*, 167/215.

23 *EU*, 83/79.

24 *EU*, 80/60.

25 *Hua XI*, 148–9/196.

26 See *Hua IX*, 163/125. Hence Husserl can write that “affection is noetically a mode of constitutive intentionality and noematically a mode of intentional unity or of the object, which, given the case, is conscious as existent in a mode of being” (*Hua Mat VIII*, 193).

of succession and coexistence results. On its basis material syntheses are built, which account for the formation of the fore- and background fields that are in turn responsible for the possibility of I's being affected.²⁷ They are associative syntheses, which in their lowest level include homogeneity or affinity and heterogeneity or strangeness.²⁸ A hyletic field in the living present is a unity because it is homogeneous in contrast to other fields that are heterogeneous with respect to it. Thus, the visual field is a unity of visual data which are similar to one another and differ, for example, from the data of the tactile field. Again, within a single field singular data may also stand out in virtue of a contrast, so, for example, a group of red patches against a white background. The prominent datum has an effect on the I, it *affects* it, it exercises an allure on it, while the background data have no such affective force, they are for the I the field of the non-living.²⁹ In fact, since the affective force of prominent data admits degrees, there is also correspondingly a grading in the affection they produce on the I, a grading that runs between the poles of full affection and zero-affection, the complete absence of affective power.³⁰

That said, we can take up again the issue of the sinking of consciousness into the unconscious state during sleep and dreaming. Husserl primarily thinks of the unconscious in terms of affection. In the two senses in which he uses the word, the unconscious appears as the reverse of affection. In the case of the unconscious as passive background, it is the mode of consciousness that trespasses the threshold of zero-affection, and whose intentional function is to passively *preserve* the conscious contents once they have left the field of the living present. From the standpoint of the I, the unconscious is the lower limit of affection, the complete absence of affective relief and of subjective answer. But "crossing" such a limit does not amount to an annihilation of the contents. On the contrary, in the continuous process of retention, the contents undergo a progressive loss of affective power, but their intentions are preserved in a manner of emptiness that Husserl terms as sedimentation.³¹ As he suggests at one point in a late manuscript, sedimentation is a kind of horizon, and more precisely a horizon of latency,³² whereas the sedimented content is constituted in a flowing manner below the zero-limit.³³ That which leaves the field of living presence enters the "reservoir of the sedimented".³⁴ In this way, primal impressions, retentions and protentions have their "constant environment of the night of the sedimented".³⁵ It should be noted that sedimentation is a feature present not only at the level of hyletic fields in the living present, but at all levels and strata of the intentional constitution. Even the own body is a sedimentation of its capacities.³⁶ And sedimentation bears effects on both poles of the intentional correlation: contents (hyletic and noematic) are sedimented, but so are, too, the acts and even the I: "the sedimentation of all living

27 *Hua* XI, 160/208.

28 *EU*, 76/74.

29 *Hua* XI, 168/217.

30 *Hua* XI, 163/211.

31 *Hua* XLII, 36.

32 *Hua Mat* VIII, 35 footnote 1.

33 *Hua Mat* VIII, 37.

34 *Hua* XLII, 63.

35 *Hua* XLII, 62.

36 *Hua Mat* VIII, 345.

temporalization includes, of course, the temporalization of the I and also of its acts".³⁷ As its reverse, the sedimented can be brought back to perception by being awakened through associations invoked by the daytime perceptual situation, thus giving rise to a sense-bestowing act in the form of a de-sedimentation [*Ent-Sedimentierung*].³⁸ In a nutshell, the horizons of latency can be brought back to patency.

Let us now turn to the second sense of the unconscious, that of sleep and dream. Sedimentation below the zero-point of affection accounts for the possibility of preserving and re-activating latent intentions. To some extent, this also applies to sleep, which "is certainly the powerlessness of reliefs".³⁹ But there are significant differences, too. On the one hand, whereas a "struggle" [*Kampf*] takes continuously place among rival affective data within the hyletic field, in sleep there is no struggle at all. And there is nothing like the I's turning-toward [*Zuwendung*] which characterizes its answering to the attraction of salient data.⁴⁰ On the other hand, "waking up" a sedimented content during the perceptual process in wakeful life and "waking up" from sleep are clearly not the same. What is common between them is the absence of affective power. Waking up within perception means to passively associate the present hyletic situation with a sedimented unity, a process that is clearly manifest in the phenomenon of recollection. The sedimented content lies in a background that can come to the fore, it is a latency within patency at large. By contrast, in sleep "perception itself is not-awaken [*unwach*]". Waking up from the unconscious sleep is rather a progressive coming-back-to-light of the entire hyletic sphere.⁴¹ Here the whole of wakeful fore- and background, i.e., patency in its entirety, emerges from unconscious latency.⁴² And as far as the process is related to affective power, this submerging and emerging can also vary in intensity, it can have degrees of "depth". We usually speak of deep and light sleepers. At the same time, depth of submersion can intersect affective power. Thus the same degree or "distance" [*Abständigkeit*] of affective power may or may not wake up the I: a relatively high clarity or a loud noise probably does not wake up a deep sleeper, but a dim light or a weak noise is sufficient for awakening a light sleeper.⁴³

4 Dreaming and Its Salient Features

It is worth noting that the very transition from wakefulness to sleep and vice versa allows us, directly though marginally, to consciously experience the phenomenon of *dreaming*. During the process of falling asleep, while we are still awake and thus aware of the surrounding world, it is not unusual that we begin to experience images. Such images do not come from the perceptual world, nor do they fall under our control as in daytime imagination.⁴⁴ The inception of the dream precedes as it were the I's complete submersion into the unconscious. And correspondingly, when we are

37 *Hua Mat VIII*, 202. For the sake of clarity, one can distinguish between sedimentation as latent preservation of objective unities (*noemata*), and habituality as latent preservation of the I and its acts and capacities (*noeses*).

38 *Hua XLII*, 37.

39 "*Schlaf ist ja Kraftlosigkeit der Abhebungen*," Ms. D 14, 15.

40 See Ms. D 14, 16.

41 Ms. D 14, 14.

42 See Ms. D 14, 13.

43 Ms. D 14, 11–12.

44 In Psychology this phenomenon is known as "hypnagogic image."

coming back to our senses, the dream may still go on for some time, merging with the progressive awareness of the surrounding world. But if we set these vivid yet rather marginal experiences aside, the most common and direct way of accessing the dreaming world is daytime *recollection* of dreams.

Recollection, like expectation and imagination, is a modification of perception. It has in common with expectation and daytime imagination that it does not present something (or some event) in person [*leibhaftig*], but it presentifies [*vergegenwärtigt*] it, that is, it makes it appear “as if” it were present. But in contrast to imagination, both recollection and expectation: a) are bound to world-time, either past or future, b) bring something into present that was (or will be) *actually* experienced. Recollection of a dream is a peculiar act because it is not the revival of some past event in world-time, it is not a presentification of any previously lived perceptual experience. Nonetheless, we all *do* actually recollect dreams, and especially those which have been remarkably pleasant or painful for us. Husserl tacitly acknowledges this, and both Fink and Lohmar explicitly admit it, as we saw in the first section above. For these reasons, it seems plausible to take these recollections, whatever their true nature (so to speak), as valid materials for an eidetic search of the most salient features of dreaming and dreams. I would suggest that such features are at least the following:

- 1 Dreaming shares the same intentional structure as daytime life, that is, the *correlation ego-cogito-cogitatum* holds good here, even if it does in a peculiar or modified way. A dream is not just a set of images passing by like a movie in a theater. Besides, along with the noematic side of the dream, the “what” of the dream, there is always someone “who” dreams, and more precisely, it is always *me* the one who dreams. But we have to make a precision in this respect, as Husserl does in a (never delivered) response to a letter concerning intersubjectivity in dreams that Jean Hering addressed to him. Husserl distinguishes between the dreaming-I [*das träumende Ich*] and the dreamt-I [*geträumtes Ich*], that is, the subject of the dream-world [*Subjekt der Traumwelt*].⁴⁵ This is an important distinction and also a source of difficulties.
- 2 While for the dreaming-I (back in wakeful life), the dream is a *recollection*, for the dreamt-I (within the dream) it is a *perception*, as Husserl himself remarks: “the dream-world’s I does not dream, it perceives”.⁴⁶ Interestingly, he adds that sleeping cannot be dreamt of; during the dream, the dreamt-I is awake, not asleep.⁴⁷
- 3 As a perceiver, this dreamt-I has experiences, it performs acts: it perceives in a general sense, but it is actually capable—within the dream—of performing any kind of intentional act, like remembering or expecting events. In the same way, it can be surprised or disappointed by something. The dreamt-I has sensations, it can sense the hot and the cold, the dry and the wet, and feelings, for it can feel good or bad, pleased or annoyed. Moreover, it can love or hate, it can behave bravely or cowardly, it can be generous or mean. It can think and judge, and of course, it can speak, even to itself, as Husserl describes in § 8 of the first “Logical Investigation”!

⁴⁵ *Hua Dok III/3*, 119.

⁴⁶ *Hua Dok III/3*, 119.

⁴⁷ *Hua Dok III/3*, 120.

- 4 On the noematic side, this dreamt-I has a correlative *dream-world* in front of it. This world contains things, objects, equipment and situations just like those we can find in the real, daytime world. Moreover, things in the dream-world are given in adumbrations, they are located in both the dream-space and in the dream-time, and they interact with one another and with the dreamt-I in many ways. And not only mere natural things but also animates are present in the dream-world: plants, persons, animals, as well as anomalous creatures like the typical monsters of the nightmares.
- 5 At the same time, intentionality in dreams differs from wakeful experience as far as in the former when compared with the latter the two intentional poles display a certain kind of *unreality*. As Husserl remarks, the dreamt-I is here a “quasi”-I, an I-as-if, whereas the dream-world is a “quasi”-world, a world-as-if, and in this sense, a certain “neutralization” of both I and world occurs here, a bracketing that “disconnects” the dreamt-I from the hyletic flowing of reality. This implies, as Julia Iribarne argues, a disconnection from the body as a sensing and moving organ of the I.⁴⁸ As a result thereof, by extricating itself from the bodily hyletic-kinesthetic conditions of daytime experience, the dreamt-I gains, in turn, a freedom that makes the appearance of the dream-world possible, of a world in which it can do things like flying without wings or aircrafts, falling into deep pits without being injured and so on. In this “quasi”-world events can happen that could never take place in the real world: the deformation and transformation of things, persons and events, or the apparition of absurd or impossible things, creatures and events.
- 6 There can be dreams within dreams, a feature dreams share with daytime imagination, where a phantasy can be encased in another one, as we mentioned above. In this way, I can wake up from a dream, and then wake up from the second dream, and be aware of the former as a dream from the viewpoint of the latter.
- 7 Intersubjectivity as such is not possible in dreams. This is the core of Husserl’s discussion with Jean Hering in the aforementioned letter. A conversation with partners in a dream cannot be continued after waking up, nor can the partners recall having been talking in the dream.⁴⁹

5 A Short Outline of the Nature of Dreaming

Now the next questions is, what kind of experience is dreaming? How is it to be characterized in connection with the usual types of wakeful *Erlebnisse*, such as perceiving, judging, wishing, willing, or speaking? I think that three possibilities hold good in this regard. Dreaming can be either (a) a kind of image-consciousness, akin to a movie, (b) a perception of some sort or (c) a presentification. Other intentional possibilities are to be ruled out from the outset. A dream may include judgments, or acts of willing, desiring and so on, it can even include and often do language, but in

48 Julia V. Iribarne, “Contributions to the Phenomenology of Dreams,” in *Essays in Celebration of the Foundation of the Organization of Phenomenological Organizations*, ed. Cheung Chan-Fai, Ivan Chvatik, Ion Copoeru, Lester Embree, Julia Iribarne, and Hans Rainer Sepp (2002), 4. <<http://www.ipjp.org/images/e-books/OPO%20Essay%2028%20-%20Contributions%20to%20the%20Phenomenology%20of%20Dreams%20-%20By%20Julia%20V.%20Iribarne.pdf>> (accessed 8 June 2021).

49 *Hua Dok* III/3, 120.

itself it does not *consist* in such accomplishments. Let me briefly discuss these three possibilities separately.

- 1 A dream can be thought of as a sort of *image* or array of images being displayed before the sleeper's eye, like the experience of watching movies in a theater. Some similarities are certainly relevant here. Indeed, very often a certain "story" seems to be running before the dreamt-I, and, like the prisoners in Plato's cave, this I is involved in the plot, but has no control over the events that take place there. Now against this view, it can be argued that dreams are no images at all. We should recall that, according to Husserl, an image [*Bild*] is a presentification which, in contrast with memory or phantasy, is not simple but *complex*. As such, it necessarily involves many elements: (a) it requires a perceptual or somehow bodily given object as the basis for intending the image through it;⁵⁰ (b) the position of existence or thesis of this perceived basis must undergo a neutralization, that is, one's belief in it must be suspended; and (c) only under the two former conditions the depicted image [*das Abgebildete*] may be intended and appear as quasi-existing.⁵¹ In contrast, for the dreamt-I its experience is a perception, as we said, which means that it is a simple experience and not a complex one mediated by a basic presentation, and it is not a neutralized experience, since it involves like any perception a certain kind of belief, it implies what we would call a "quasi"-thesis. In short, the dream is neither an image nor a neutralization of a presentation within the dream—although it is of course possible to *dream* of Dürer's engraving "Knight, Death and the Devil"!
- 2 In a passage of a manuscript, Husserl seems to consider dreaming to be a presentation, and more precisely, "an anomalous mode of wakefulness", which consists in a suspension [*Enthebung*] of the "real" surrounding world.⁵² To my knowledge, this is where he comes closer to think dreaming as a perception. But it seems that he is speaking here from the point of view of the dreamt-I. Alternatively, one might think of the dream as something similar to daytime hallucinations. This would also involve the claim that dreams are like wakeful perceptions but of a delusive kind. However, in the same passage we just quoted before, Husserl adds that, in contrast with dreamless sleep, this suspension of reality is not merely a submersion, but a "dreaming-phantasizing" [*träumend-phantasierend*] submersion. Furthermore, absorbed in the dream, I find myself in a quasi-world with regard to which I have quasi-interests as modifications of the worldly interests of daytime life.⁵³
- 3 Therefore, it seems to be more plausible for the dream to be a *presentification*. When Hering asks Husserl about the role of intersubjectivity in dreams, Husserl replies that we have here a "pseudo-intersubjectivity" because it occurs in the dream-world, which is a "pseudo-world", just as the dreamt-I is also a "pseudo-I". And he then adds the crucial explanation: "'Pseudo-' means here just the sense of a presentification".⁵⁴ Commenting on this passage, Hans Rainer Sepp

⁵⁰ *Hua* III/1, 234/245.

⁵¹ *Hua* III/1, 252/262.

⁵² *Hua* XXIX, 336.

⁵³ *Hua* XXIX, 336.

⁵⁴ *Hua Dok* III/3, 120.

remarks that a paradoxical situation arises here because the dreamt-I seems to be a pseudo-I, an invention of the dreaming-I, that is, a *presentification*, but at the same time, it is for itself, as we said, a *perceiving* subject.⁵⁵

In his dissertation on *Presentification and Image*, Eugen Fink tackles precisely this paradox. He claims that dreaming is a presentification, and not a perception, and then emphasizes that it is “nothing else but a submerged phantasy” [*versunkene Phantasie*]. What makes dreaming different from other kinds of phantasies is that its condition of possibility is the most extreme submersion [*versunkener*] of the dreaming-I. It is a submerged phantasy which can “only take place in that mode of the presence of the dreaming-I that we call sleep”.⁵⁶ With regard to wakeful life, the I is submerged in the most extreme passivity, but within this passive underworld, there is nevertheless activity—“quasi”-activity. This might seem to entail, Fink goes on, a suppression of the intentional correlation, because the dreamt-I could not be included in the temporal flow of consciousness; dreaming would then be a “temporal missing phase within the unitary process of the constitution of world”, an “incomprehensible irrational break”, a “dark pause of experiencing life”.⁵⁷ Correlatively, there could not be a world there. Now I think that these two objections, the lack of world, and the break of temporality, can be rebutted as follows.

According to Fink, if we reflect on the meaning of this alleged “worldlessness” [*Weltlosigkeit*], we may find out that there is nothing like a chasm, a mere being-worldless [*Weltlossein*], but rather a *specific mode* of “having-a-world” [*Welthabe*], namely the mode of having-a-world in the extreme mode of submersion.⁵⁸ It is by means of this peculiar mode that the dream-world-I can constitute a dream-world. As to the break of temporality, we may recall what Husserl says with regard to the temporal difference between presentation and presentification. As he writes in *Experience and Judgement*:

“But one thing which distinguishes actually existing objects is necessarily lacking in the mere fiction: *absolute temporal position*... [...] [T]ime is certainly represented in imagination,... but it is *a time without actual, strict localization of position*—it is, precisely, a *quasi-time*.⁵⁹

However, although the acts of imagination need not be related either to one another or to actual perceptions, they bear a certain unity as far as all experiences of any kind, be perceptions, recollections, expectations, or imaginations, are encompassed by a unity of intuition.⁶⁰ This means that quasi-individual objects in imagination, and their quasi-identity in a quasi-world are unified by the unity of time “as the condition

55 Hans Rainer Sepp, “Dream,” in *Handbook of Phenomenological Aesthetics*, ed. Hans Rainer Sepp and Lester Embree (Dordrecht: Springer, 2010): 75–80; here 75.

56 Fink, “Vergegenwärtigung,” 63.

57 Fink, “Vergegenwärtigung,” 64. I follow here Zippel’s translation in: Nicola Zippel, “Dreaming Consciousness: A Contribution from Phenomenology,” in *Rivista Internazionale di Filosofia e Psicologia*, vol. 7/2 (2016): 180–201; here 183. Henceforth cited as “Dreaming” when referring to Zippel’s text and “Trans Zippel” when quoting Zippel’s translation of Fink’s “Vergegenwärtigung.”

58 Fink, “Vergegenwärtigung,” 64. “Trans Zippel”, 184.

59 EU, § 39, 197/169.

60 EU, § 41, 204/174.

of the possibility of the unity of the world”.⁶¹ Ultimately, the world of imagination “is possible only within the world of actual experience, on the basis of absolute temporal position”.⁶² *Mutatis mutandis*, this is also valid for the world of dreams.

But there is still another interesting point I would like to highlight in this regard. Daytime presentification of the kind of imagination always offers a certain tension or “struggle” with perceptual consciousness, as we stated above. It is over against “submerged” perception, in other words, in connection with the perceptual field’s receding into the background, that imagination can stand out in order to get the I’s attraction. But clearly, this is not the case with dreams. One reason why Husserl hesitates in considering the dream a presentification is precisely this: when the I is submerged, sunken into the unconscious, there is no contrast at all between the dream-world and the perceptual world.⁶³ In contrast, Fink believes that precisely this feature is what allows to settle the question: this complete submersion, this being totally disengaged from the daytime perceptual world, is what makes it possible to build a world which is alternative to present reality as a whole. This situation is also associated with the degree of egoic freedom: “While the imagination-world is the free creation of the imagining ego, totally at its disposal, with the increasing degree of submersion the staging freedom decreases”. And he adds: “The submerged ego, deprived of its own will, produces in hidden passivity”.⁶⁴ Nicola Zippel comments here: “Dreaming unifies possibility and passivity”, which thus represents a *sui generis* presentification.⁶⁵ It is the creation of a space wherein the co-existence of reality and unreality is made possible. Thus, for the dreaming-I its dreamt world is a “real world”, and this is also the reason why we can describe the dreaming-I as perceiving.⁶⁶ Moreover, the dream elapses in a special form of passivity, in a “hidden passivity”, as Fink puts it. Husserl agrees with Fink on this point; he wonders whether the dream is a “dream play” [*Traumspiel*] whereby the worldly apperception of daytime life is neutralized and left “without a ground” [*bodenloses*].⁶⁷ He then comments: “when I dream, I surrender to the play of associative effects and fulfilling phantasy images, which cohere partly, then disintegrate, again partly...”.⁶⁸ The passive syntheses undergo here a change since they are not committed to the apperception of the real world. However, the apparently resulting *Bodenlosigkeit* appears to the dreaming-I as a sort of “ground”, a quasi-ground, which is associated with a quasi-Earth, both having a certain validity, a quasi-validity.⁶⁹ This clarifies what Fink meant when he described the worldlessness of the dream-world. As he points out, the feature of the “quasi” makes intelligible why this dreaming-I can perform the same kinds of acts it does in waking life. And Husserl similarly remarks: “all the types of acts this I performs: her perceptions, recollections, expectations, but also her affective and volitional acts, are acts in the mode of the as-if”.⁷⁰

61 *EU*, § 40, 202/172.

62 *EU*, 203/73. Husserl further relates this unity to the work of association (*EU*, § 42, 208/177).

63 See Zippel, “Dreaming,” 184.

64 Fink, “Vergegenwärtigung”, 65. “Trans Zippel”, 184. Slightly revised.

65 Zippel, “Dreaming”, 184.

66 Fink, “Vergegenwärtigung”, 66. “Trans Zippel”, 185.

67 *Hua* XLII, 500. Husserl is most likely alluding here to August Strindberg’s play of the same name.

68 *Hua* XLII, 500.

69 *Hua* XLII, 500.

70 *Hua* XLII, 501.

6 A Final Remark

Although the actual body is disconnected from its wakeful functions during sleep, and even though Husserl does sometimes refer to the content of the dreams as “images” [*Bilder*], it is for the most part merely a *façon de parler*. Indeed, since the experience of dreams implies the entire correlation in the mode of the “quasi”, it should include the *own body* along with subjectivity (the I and its *noeses*), and objectivity (the noematic “quasi”-world). Thus, we can say that a “quasi”-body is necessarily implied in dreaming. Since the dream is not just a movie being displayed on a screen for *no-body*, it is precisely *some-body* who must play the main role, and it is specifically through its body that the I can interact with the dream-world’s events and creatures. Again, there can be many divergences in the behavior of this quasi-body with respect to normal daytime intentionality, but such disagreements are held against the backdrop of that normal body. The dreamt-body appears to the dreamt-I as a material thing that can produce causal (quasi-causal) effects on the dream-world, and that also suffers effects (“quasi”-effects) from the dream-world things (it can for instance push something or being pushed by something, and the like). In addition, it has a certain location, first of all, as zero-point of the dreamt-I orientation system. But as a living body [*Leib*], it also retains its two most remarkable dimensions. On the one hand, it is a feeling body, one that is affected by the sensible quasi-stimuli that the dreamt scene displays. On the other hand, as a moving body, it is capable of acting and effecting on the dream-world. A passage from *Ideas II* confirms this: “in dreaming we have courses of hetero-aesthetic lived experiences which are not inserted into the real world”.⁷¹ An interesting question in this respect concerns hyletic data. Can we speak of a “quasi”-hyle in the case of the dream’s “quasi”-perceptual presentation? Or are all such data just a peculiar sort of “ortho-aesthetic” experiences? But we cannot address this important topic here.

⁷¹ *Hua IV*, 336/347.