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Introduction

IN THE long history of human thinking about dreams—about what they are, where they come from, and what they mean—the modern period stands out in that here a scientific investigation of dreaming can go hand in hand with the assumption that dreams do not mean anything. The psychiatrists and neuroscientists Allan Hobson and Robert McCarley, for instance, declared in 1977 that dreams result from random firing of neurons in the brain stem. In this picture, our dream thoughts and images are just meaningless noise from a sleeping brain, completely void of any possible signification.¹ Such a view stands out against the long ancient background of human reflection on dreams not in that it denies that dreams could mean or signify anything—dreams have been called random and senseless long before (e.g., by Clytemnestra in Aeschylus’s *Agamemnon* 275)—but in that this view is part of a life-long, career-defining research interest in dreams.²

By contrast, all ancient Greek thinkers who seriously inquired into what dreams are and where they come from assumed that they are principally

1. Hobson and McCarley 1977, 1347 (when we dream our forebrain is “making the best of a bad job in producing even partially coherent dream imagery from the relatively noisy signals sent up to it from the brain stem. The dream process is thus seen as having its origin in sensorimotor systems, with little or no primary ideational, volitional, or emotional content”). See Zadra and Stickgold 2021, 87–94, for a discussion of Hobson’s work. Hobson and McCarley are famous for the “activation-synthesis-hypothesis” (on which see Zadra and Stickgold 2021, 93–94 and 262–63).

2. Allan Hobson (1933–2021) was one of the most famous dream researchers of the second half of the twentieth century. He later was more cautious about whether dreams are completely random noise. See e.g., Hobson 2002, 4, where he clearly acknowledges the emotional salience of dreams; moreover, he states in the introduction (1–2): “We are *not* saying that dream content is unimportant, uninformative, or even uninterpretable. . . . but it is already crystal clear that many aspects of dreaming previously thought to be meaningful, privileged, and interpretable psychologically, are the simple reflection of the sleep-related changes in [the] brain state.”

significant of *something*. This holds, crucially, regardless of whether they understood dreams as messages sent by the gods or as originating from our body or mind. Moreover, we find across the different explanations of dreams the consistent idea that dreams often mean something other than what they literally say—in other words, that they speak indirectly, figuratively, or in metaphors. Many ancient authors were fascinated with this formal aspect of dreams and the hermeneutic questions dreams raise. Understanding and interpreting such dreams then often turned into understanding and interpreting figurative language more generally. Many of the texts that discuss dreams and their interpretation, so I will argue, reflect on the process of interpretation and on basic aspects of figurative, indirect language. Indeed, as I will argue further, dream interpretation is the place where ancient Greek hermeneutic thought develops, often before it does elsewhere.

Dreams in Ancient Greek Texts

In ancient Greek texts, dreams are for the most part presented as significant, but not all dreams convey their message in an indirect, figurative format. Indeed, sometimes dreams give a straightforward message, through a person-like divine figure who speaks directly and unambiguously to the dreamer. Modern-day scholars have often distinguished such dreams strictly from what they call “symbolic dreams.”³ However, and as we will see, in several dream examples, a strict distinction does not do justice to the evidence, as the appearance of a messenger-type figure may go together with figurative imagery and a language that speaks indirectly or metaphorically.⁴ Hence, the distinction between “symbolic” and “messenger” dreams may have some descriptive value, but is, in the end, of limited use for analyzing and classifying the dream material relevant here.⁵

My focus will be on dreams that are depicted and interpreted as presenting their message in an indirect, riddling, or metaphorical way. These dreams say

3. Oppenheim 1956, 186–217; Dodds 1951, 104–7; Harris 2009, 23–90 (epiphany vs. episode / messenger); Holton 2022, 29–47, argues that the classification is “fluid,” but then suggests several more categories (e.g., “visitation dream,” “actualized dream,” “symbolic / episodic dream,” “the misinterpreted dream,” etc.). Cf. the helpful discussion of Husser 1999, 100 (concerning dreams in the Hebrew Bible). Apart from the distinction that is drawn, the term “symbolic” is potentially misleading (cf. States 1997, 149–50).

4. E.g., *Od.* 19 (discussed in chapter 1), *Hdt.* 3.27–38, 3.61–66.1; Plato, *Crito* 44a–b (discussed in chapter 3).

5. Other scholars have, with different arguments, questioned the reliability or usefulness of the distinction. E.g., Rousseau 1963, 104 (regarding dreams in Aeschylus); Noegel 2007 (regarding Near Eastern dreams).

something that goes beyond their mere appearance or literal sense. We find such dreams in ancient Greek texts of different genres and backgrounds: in epic and drama, but also beyond, in Antiphon (fifth-century BCE author of a treatise on dream interpretation), the Hippocratic medical text *On Regimen*, in Plato's dialogues, and in Aristotle. In short, we are dealing with a widely shared cultural conceptualization of dreams as figurative and metaphorical in nature.

I am interested in foregrounding and better understanding this conceptualization. My study is hence not an investigation into how ancient Greek people actually dreamed.⁶ Instead, I am interested in how authors of texts that we today classify as literature, scientific writings, and philosophical treatises and dialogues thought about and conceptualized dreams. All dreams discussed in this study are most likely constructions of some sort rather than "real" dreams (whatever that might be). These constructed dreams, however, can tell us a good deal about what their authors thought about dreams and about how to understand what they might mean.

Understanding Dreams in Ancient Greece

Among ancient Greek thinkers, from Homer to Aeschylus, from Herodotus to Antiphon, and from the Hippocratic doctors to Plato and Aristotle, we find an interest in dreaming combined with the view that dreams can be significant.⁷ These authors present dreams as signifying something by means of figurative imagery or metaphors. But *what*, according to these authors, can dreams tell us and *why* do they do so in an obscure and indirect format? There are two basic types of answers to this double question.

The first type of answer, prevalent in epic (Homer), drama (Aeschylus, Euripides), and Herodotus's *Histories* (discussed in part I, "Divine Dreams"), is that dreams are disguised messages sent from the gods to humans in an ambiguous, metaphorical, and ultimately riddling format. The message may contain information about the future, a warning, or other insights that go beyond the waking knowledge and understanding of the dreamer. The human task in the face of the divine is to interpret the dream and solve the riddle by being able to understand its figurative language. A correct interpretation leads to uncovering the real message of the gods.

The second type of explanation (discussed in part III, "Dreams of the Body") consists in a physiological account of dreams that explains their

6. On this question see Harris 2009 and Renberg 2015. Neither will I cover incubation practices, on which see Renberg 2017.

7. On the generality of that belief, see Hanson 1980, 1396.

associative, metaphorical character as due to a distortion of sensory data that occurs either within our body (Aristotle; hinted at already in Plato's *Timaeus*) or outside of it (Democritus). On this account, dreams speak indirectly because they are altered versions of something else, be it daytime thoughts or previously or simultaneously experienced sensory impressions coming either from within the body or from outside. Antiphon likely belonged to this group, as is suggested by new papyrological evidence (see chapter 5). The Hippocratic author of *On Regimen* explains the metaphorical character of our dreams as being testament to the way our soul captures the internal state of our body (chapter 6). In none of the different views that fall under this second form of explanation are gods the sender of dream messages. Still, it would be misguided to think of the earlier type of explanation as being superseded by a more advanced, physiological account. Even though the one developed only after the other was already an established approach to dreams, both continued to exist, sometimes side-by-side, for a long time afterward.

It is crucial to highlight that despite the fundamental difference between the two approaches, *both* regard dreams as potentially signifying something that lies behind their appearance *and* both assume that to interpret them and reach their hidden message, one needs to understand and unravel the indirect, figurative format in which dreams present themselves. Moreover, the *method of interpretation* to uncover the true message behind either a divinely encoded or a physiologically distorted dream story is *the same* in both cases.

Interpreting Dreams in Ancient Greece

Regardless of whether a dream is taken as a divine message or a physiological signal that triggers inside the body, in order to interpret it one needs to understand the associations that lie behind the imagery through which it presents itself to us. The ancients thought of this hermeneutic procedure as identifying *similarities* between the dream and what it signifies. There is then a two-level structure of what the dream literally says and what it actually means.⁸ Interestingly, there was one standard form of interpretation, which I call the “hermeneutics of similarity” (see chapter 1). This hermeneutic approach consists of (i) the expectation that the dream signifies something beyond its literal depiction; (ii) a focus on particular elements and characters in the dream; (iii) the identification of *thematic* or *formal* similarities between those elements and their hidden, figurative sense; and, based on those similarities, (iv) the

8. There is a *structural* parallelism to what Freud calls manifest and latent dream thought. On Freud, see my epilogue.

substitution of the literal sense with the figurative one. Understanding one thing *as* another based on *thematic* similarities comes close to what we call “metaphor” today.⁹ However, the attention to *formal*, phonetic similarities between two words is similar to punning but goes beyond it in that the similarities are used hermeneutically to *understand* one word *as* another similar one.

Ancient Greek authors from Homer onward are conversant with this hermeneutic practice and they reflect on and problematize it. Some texts discussed here may present the hermeneutics of similarity as an unsuccessful strategy to understand what a dream may mean. Yet, regardless of whether the interpretive work is depicted as successful or failing, the authors of these texts use, I propose, the question of how to understand dreams to explore not only hermeneutic questions more broadly but also, and crucially, some related basic aspects of language, especially language in its figurative capacity.

Dreams as Objects of Interpretation

Dreams can be seen as belonging to a wider context of ancient Greek divination and as being one among several kinds of divinatory signs that call for interpretation.¹⁰ And yet I suggest, based on the evidence at hand, that the interpretation of dreams is a particular case in that here more than with other divine signs a discourse of reflection about interpretation, its rules and its limits, developed; it is hence in the context of dream interpretation more than in accounts of oracles, bird-flights, or entrails, that the very undertaking of interpreting an obscure message is scrutinized and that this scrutiny and reflection becomes accessible to us.

There seem to have been several reasons for this somewhat exceptional status of dreams as objects of interpretation in the history of hermeneutics. Among those are: the particular, often associative, nature and format of dreams; the immediacy, vividness, and emotional salience of dreaming; dreams’ availability and the ubiquity of the dream experience in human life. It seems then that dreams, on account of their specific enigmatic appearance,

9. On metaphor understood according to cognitive (and sociolinguistic) approaches, see Gibbs 2008 and Kövecses 2010. I should point out that I am investigating in this study a *prehistory* of metaphor, which implies that the views on metaphorical language encountered in ancient classical discourse on dreams should not be expected to correspond closely to the different later theories of metaphor developed after Aristotle and especially in the twentieth century (on metaphor, see also below).

10. Cf. Beerden 2013, 107–38. For overviews on divination in Greco-Roman antiquity, see also Bonnechere 2007; Johnston and Struck 2005; Raphals 2013; Struck 2016; Dillon 2017; Addey 2022.

elicited a desire for interpretation to a higher degree than other phenomena that were regarded as divine signs. Indeed, the interpretation-evoking nature of dreams becomes evident in that even those Greek thinkers who deny their divine status engaged in the project of their interpretation.¹¹

Understanding Figurative Language beyond Dreams

The problems encountered in trying to understand dreams help ancient thinkers to analyze phenomena that are part of everyday language and communication. We say one thing but mean something else. We say something by means of another. Such indirect forms of expression are not restricted to what we call “metaphor.” Metonymy, polysemy, puns, idioms, and irony are related concepts relevant here (see below). Dreams offer an interesting magnifier and a test site for the way human language works in some of its perhaps most fascinating aspects.

That the relevance and influence of dream interpretation was not restricted to understanding the meaning of dreams is corroborated by the fact that the exegetical method developed in its context can be found in other areas, including other forms of divination and, perhaps most prominently and significantly, the allegorical interpretation of poetic texts (see my discussion in chapter 4). The technique of revealing an underlying sense could have been readily transferred from dreams understood as natural reservoirs of figurative language to other forms of human expression, such as myth and poetry, that often speak figuratively, metaphorically, or otherwise indirectly, and that can be regarded

11. Zooming out from the Greeks or even the Mediterranean world, it is fair to say that the fascination with dreams and the impetus to make sense of or interpret them is a human universal. This is suggested by anthropological research in dreaming (see, e.g., Tedlock 2001; Bulkeley 2008). Among various cultures and at various times, individuals share their dreams and interpret their meaning, using various forms of associations, including those based on similarities. For instance, Desjarlais 1991 speaks of “an implicit dictionary of dream symbolism” (as reported in Tedlock 2001, 251) among the Yolmo Sherpa in Nepal; Jackson 1978, 120–21, describes how a Kuranko diviner (Sierra Leone) interpreted one of his dreams, relying on different kinds of symbolism and associations (e.g., “a book signifies knowledge,” “being in a strange place . . . signifies good fortune,” 121). Raphals 2013, 30–1, 140–42, points to the relevance (and some examples, see 295–97) of early Chinese dream divination. A cross-cultural comparison of Greek practices of dream interpretation with other cultures lies outside this study (see, however, my brief discussions of Near Eastern and Egyptian dream interpretation in chapter 1 and of Artemidorus of Daldis and Sigmund Freud in the epilogue). My focus is to investigate how ancient Greek thinkers of the classical period worked with a specific yet widely shared technique of interpretation and the hermeneutic questions that it raises.

as enigmatic. Clearly, dream hermeneutics was not the only factor shaping the interpretation of poetic texts, nor does its result align with the specific meaning that allegorical readers claim to be finding in poetic texts, but evidence suggests that dream interpretation was an especially important, but in its importance so far often overlooked, factor in the formation of a specific hermeneutic attitude toward texts regarded as polyvalent.¹²

The Aims of This Study

My investigation, as a first step, wants to show that a wide range of ancient Greek authors took the interpretation of dreams seriously and to reveal how they thought about and engaged with it. I want to bring those texts to the fore because many of them are under-researched, even neglected or at times disparaged. In short, there is no scholarly book-length treatment of dream interpretation in ancient Greece.¹³ I analyze the thought on dreams and their interpretation as it is expressed in ancient stories in epic and drama, historiographical research, and scientific and philosophical treatises preserved either entirely or fragmentarily, ranging from Homer to Aristotle. There has been little research on ancient Greek dream interpretation before Artemidorus's second-century CE *Oneirocritica*, our first extant dream manual. My study intends to fill this gap and provide a fruitful basis for the growing interest in Artemidorus and other later evidence of dream interpretation.¹⁴

Secondly, my book strives to demonstrate that—and to show how—these thinkers used dream interpretation as a space to analyze and think about interpretation and language, and especially the figurative forms of language they saw as naturally pronounced in dreams. Classical scholarship has denied that hermeneutics, understood as a “systematic elaboration of a set of rules to control and guide the interpretation” of a text, existed in ancient Greece.¹⁵ This

12. Scholars have suggested a link between divination (dreams but especially oracles) and allegorical interpretation: Sluiter 1997, 163–68; Struck 2004, 170–92; 2005; and Most 1997, 120; 2016, 62.

13. There are survey studies that touch on dream interpretation (e.g., Holowchak 2002; Näf 2004). A more detailed presentation of the interpretation of dreams in classical Greece is given by van Lieshout 1980, who devotes an extensive chapter to it (pp. 165–251). See also the overviews in Büchschütz 1868; Bouché-Leclercq 1879–1882, 1.291–329; Hopfner 1937; Bittrich 2014; Renberg 2015.

14. On Artemidorus's *Oneirocritica*, see Harris-McCoy 2012; Chandezon and du Bouchet 2012; 2023; Weber 2015; Thonemann 2020; Scott 2022. On dreams in the Roman empire, see Harrisson 2013; on dreams in late antiquity see Miller 1994.

15. Most 1984; 2006.

verdict holds true if we take “systematic” in a strict sense. But if we allow for a looser understanding, the *consistency* of dream hermeneutics across time and genre, and the continued *reflection* on its potencies and limits in our Greek sources, warrant, I propose, the term “ancient hermeneutics” as I use it in this book. Similarly, as Sluiter has pointed out, the study of semantics, understood as a theory of meaning, did not exist in Greek classical times.¹⁶ But, as Sluiter suggests in passing and I will argue in this book, in the context of dream interpretation we can identify a quasi-theoretical engagement with questions of language and specifically semantics in a variety of texts prior to Aristotle.¹⁷ This ancient hermeneutic and semantic thought, I suggest, has remained underappreciated because ancient reflections on dreams and their interpretation, even though present in the works of prominent authors, doctors, and philosophers, have often been downplayed or outright ignored as not being intellectually worthwhile. Yet, many ancient thinkers took dreams and the question of how to understand them very seriously, and so we should do the same with their thoughts. In looking at dream interpretation, we study an important topic in Greek intellectual history and at the same time can draw up an early history of interpretation and hermeneutic thought in classical Greece.

Some Relevant Terms

Figurative language: In this introduction as well as throughout the book, I use phrases such as “saying one thing but meaning another” or “to say one thing by means of another,” to capture the basic move of figurative language.¹⁸ I use the term “figurative language” to describe the phenomenon where a word is used in a sense different from a literal or more concrete meaning it also has. But my use of the term “figurative” is in most cases more restricted than just

16. Sluiter 1997, 149.

17. Sluiter 1997, 149–50: “Although . . . the problem of signification . . . formed a central concern, no autonomous semantics . . . ever developed. . . . Language did not get to be studied for its own sake until the hesitating emergence of ‘technical grammar’ in the 2nd / 1st centuries BCE. . . . However, this does not mean that the Greeks had no semantic theories; it just implies that the study of ‘meaning’ was taken up in different contexts with specific requirements. . . . Interpreting ‘words’ and interpreting the spoken or written ‘texts’ of the gods (oracles, dreams) or of great authoritative poets of the past, are in a sense related activities.” Sluiter does not say more about dreams but focuses briefly on oracles.

18. The former is an adaptation of how Sluiter 1997, 164–65 describes the synecdochical and metaphorical understanding of the “wooden wall” oracle in Hdt. 7.142–44 (“what one says and what one means do not stand in a one-to-one correspondence”). The latter is a typical way to describe what a metaphor is, widely used in literature on the subject (see, e.g., Kövecses 2010, 176.)

any form of meaning something other than what one says, such as in irony (meaning the opposite of what is said), or hyperbole (meaning something to a lesser degree than said). A common case of the kind of figurative language that is in focus here is metaphor, as when someone calls a friend “a rock.” It does not mean that the friend is a stone, but that she is a very reliable person. Yet, my use of the term “figurative” is wider than the term “metaphor.” When Iphigenia understands her “pouring water” over Orestes in her dream as signifying that he is dead, she takes the ritual step of pouring water to represent the whole ritual that ends in the victim’s death. She takes “to pour water” as a figurative expression, by metonymy rather than metaphor.¹⁹

Metaphor: I use the term “metaphor” or “metaphorical” when something is said through or by means of something else (see the example above).²⁰ Without importing too much of modern queries about what a metaphor is or adopting wholeheartedly every aspect of conceptual metaphor theory, I regard metaphors as basic patterns of our language and thinking.²¹ Often, to understand something complex or abstract we describe it by means of something in another more basic (or more concrete) domain.²² In speaking like that, we see a crucial correspondence or similarity between the source domain and the target domain, or between vehicle and tenor.²³ This is a similarity between

19. See my discussion in chapter 2.

20. Kövecses 2010, 176: “The main function of metaphor is to understand one thing in terms of another. Understanding is achieved by mapping the structure of one domain onto another.”

21. Gibbs 2008 offers a good introduction to the research on metaphor and further literature. On conceptual metaphor theory, see Lakoff and Johnson 1980; Lakoff and Turner 1989; and Kövecses 2010. Other important theories of metaphor developed in the twentieth century can be found (among others) in Black 1962; Derrida 1974; Ricœur 1975a; and de Man 1978. Metaphor is ubiquitous in Greek language from our earliest sources. On metaphor in Homer, see Zanker 2019. That metaphor is a basic aspect of our language and thought is an insight not only of modern theorizing of metaphor but is to some extent implicit in Aristotle’s understanding of metaphor. On this, see chapter 7. On the problematic distinction between the literal and the metaphorical see, for instance, Lloyd 1987, 172–74 (and throughout my discussion).

22. E.g., we may capture the complexities of human interactions by thinking of a love relationship as a journey (“we came to a dead-end” or “we are at a crossroads”) or by describing a verbal dispute as a war zone (“he attacked every weak point in his argument,” “your claims are indefensible”). These are standard examples from Lakoff and Johnson 1980, 3–6; Lakoff and Turner 1989, 9–10; Lakoff 2001; and also Kövecses 2010, 6.

23. Lakoff denies that the similarity *precedes* the formation of a metaphor (see, e.g., Lakoff and Turner 1989, 198; also in Lakoff 2001; Kövecses 2010, 77–84). On the crucial role that similarity plays in understanding metaphor see, e.g., Gentner and Wolff 1997, 334: (“Comparison processes are fundamental in metaphor”). Cf. also the discussions in Black 1962, 35–37; Ricœur 1975a, 221–72; Kövecses 2010, 5, 174–76; Glucksberg 2008, 70–74.

otherwise different things; a common genus, as Aristotle would put it (*Rh.* III 10, 1410b14–15; see also chapter 7). Throughout my study I keep the terminology and theoretical implications of modern theorizing of metaphor at a minimum, and I use it only insofar as it can help to understand the ideas formulated in the ancient texts.

Polysemy: Most words do not have just one sense but a range of *related* senses. This basic phenomenon is called polysemy.²⁴ Various fifth-century thinkers were interested in this phenomenon specifically (see discussions in chapters 2, 4, and 6). The term “homonymy,” in contrast to polysemy, captures the fact that two words sound identical but have different, *unrelated* meanings (e.g., a “bank” where you deposit money and a river “bank”).

Paronomasia: I use the term as more or less synonymous with a pun—in other words, it describes the fact that two semantically unrelated words sound similar.

Overview of Chapters

Part I (“Divine Dreams”): Chapter 1 looks at the earliest instance of ancient Greek dream interpretation, Penelope’s dream in *Odyssey* 19. This dream is interpreted according to what I term the “hermeneutics of similarity,” a procedure that entails four crucial steps and relies in its core on the identification of formal and thematic resemblances between the dream and its supposed meaning. The interpretive method is related to other forms of divinatory interpretation (such as bird omens, for instance), while some aspects are specific to the exegesis of dreams. A look at earlier evidence of dream interpretation in Mesopotamian, Egyptian, and Hebrew sources demonstrates that ancient Greek dream interpretation belongs to a long history of similar approaches to the hermeneutic challenges that dreams pose. Still, Penelope’s hermeneutic doubt about the interpretation of her dream and her critical discussion of its method is the starting point of a vibrant history of Greek intellectual engagement with dream interpretation and the questions it engenders about figurative language and understanding.

Chapter 2 turns to dreams and their interpretation in Aeschylus, Herodotus, and Euripides. These three authors, I argue, use dream interpretation in their works to explore the potential of figurative language. In *Persians* and *Libation Bearers*, Aeschylus, himself a master of metaphorical language, depicts the hermeneutic challenges that ambiguous and metaphorical dreams pose to

24. See Nerlich 2003; Luján 2013; Kövecses 2010, 251–54. On the concept of “semantic stretch” (and its relation to polysemy) see Lloyd 1987, 172–74.

their interpreters to draw attention specifically to the polysemy of words whose meanings can be opposite to each other. In Herodotus's stories of human hermeneutic failure in understanding divine dreams, he problematizes and thereby lucidly analyzes the distinction between the literal and the metaphorical. For instance, in depicting how Astyages (1.107–28) fails to understand the difference between actually being a king and BEING KING in pretend play, Herodotus explores the linguistic phenomenon that modern metaphor theory has termed “category extension.” In *Iphigenia among the Taurians*, Euripides takes up Aeschylus's interest in polysemy, but instead of focusing on semantic polarity, the interpretation of Iphigenia's dream, renegotiated throughout the play, foregrounds how metonymy and metaphor are operative in ritual actions.

Chapter 3 analyzes dream interpretation in Plato's portrayal of Socrates and in the *Timaeus*. I argue that in Plato, traditional dream hermeneutics turns ethical. This works in two ways. On the one hand, debating the meaning of Socrates's dream in *Crito* and *Phaedo* coincides with an inquiry into the choice and consequences of Socrates's philosophical life. On the other, *Timaeus*'s physiological and teleological account of the liver not only explains why and how gods communicate to humans in their dreams, but it also reveals that the ability to receive and understand divine dreams relies on a person's moral virtue, specifically, one's sound-mindedness (*sophrosyne*) and self-knowledge, as exemplified most prominently by Socrates. Along the way, Plato, in the *Crito*, probes a new form of figurative language by having Socrates's dream contain a line from the *Iliad* that, through its “original-context” meaning, develops a multitude of exhortative significations for Socrates.

Part II (“Interpretation beyond Dreams”): Chapter 4 looks beyond the interpretation of dreams to trace dream interpretation's impact on and entanglement with other areas of hermeneutics and theoretical study of language that burgeon in the late fifth century BCE. The chapter begins with an analysis of the dream-interpretation scene at the beginning of Aristophanes's *Wasps*. This funny depiction of an exegesis of a dream is indicative of two aspects of dream hermeneutics present in late fifth-century intellectual discourse. First, dream hermeneutics is closely related to allegorical interpretation of poetry, as exemplified most prominently in the Derveni papyrus. Second, dream hermeneutics is the place where many of the linguistic questions raised by sophistic thinkers (Prodicus and the author of the *Dissoi Logoi*, among others) are first formulated and discussed. These questions concern especially the relation between the formal (i.e., phonetic) features of a word and its semantic properties.

Part III (“Dreams of the Body”): With chapter 5 we turn to the interpretation of dreams that are regarded as originating in the physical world, specifically from within the human body, instead of from the gods. Crucially, and as

we will see throughout chapters 5 to 7, naturalistic explanations of dreaming preclude neither the expectation that dreams may be significant or even contain important information nor a strong interest in the hermeneutic questions they raise. My analysis begins with the fifth-century philosopher Antiphon, who is credited with having written the first treatise on dream interpretation. To better understand Antiphon's achievement, we need to first consider the novel naturalistic theories of dreams that were available in the fifth century. We can find them, for instance, expressed by the figure Artabanus in Herodotus's *Histories* or in the fragments of Democritus. Thanks to new papyrological evidence, we know that Antiphon offered a naturalistic explanation of dreams as well. Based on the indirect evidence for Antiphon's book on dream interpretation, I reconstruct his method as modifying traditional dream hermeneutics in two respects: first, it relies on identifying nonobvious similarities between the dream image and the future event it predicts; second, it is formed as a debate in which the correct interpretation results through the reversal of a previous incorrect one. The later respect reveals how Antiphon's dream hermeneutics connects with other parts of his oeuvre, and the former points to Antiphon's sophisticated reflection on the workings of figurative language. The evidence suggests that for Antiphon, the language of dreams can tell us something about the language we use when awake.

In chapter 6, I turn to the Hippocratic text *On Regimen*, written around 400 BCE. This text is the earliest extant treatise in which the interpretation of dreams is a central topic. Dream interpretation here is used for medical diagnostic purposes. I show that it is only through dream interpretation (performed in book 4) that the author makes good on his promise of "pre-diagnosis" (expressed in books 1–3), a new method to detect diseases before they manifest any symptoms. I propose a reading of *On Regimen* from the perspective of dream hermeneutics and argue that the author provides in his work a *cosmological* explanation and *justification* of the hermeneutics of similarity. First, the author makes the rationale of traditional dream hermeneutics the key formula to explain the entire cosmos. This enables him to provide an explanation of *why* dreams speak in the way they do and a justification for his own medical practice of dream interpretation. Secondly, the author justifies the hermeneutics of similarity by pointing out how resemblances between many different domains of life are captured and expressed in the semantic stretch of words. *On Regimen* offers a cosmological and physiological explanation of dream interpretation next to sophisticated reflections on some basic but complex features of language, specifically the workings of polysemy and metaphor.

Chapter 7 focuses on Aristotle. In Aristotle's *On Divination in Sleep*, I contend, the hermeneutics of similarity and what he coins *metaphora* in *Poetics* and *Rhetoric* become explicitly linked for the first time. I argue, against a widely

shared scholarly opinion, that Aristotle is receptive to the assumptions underlying traditional dream hermeneutics, and that his theory of dreams (in *On Dreams*) and his comments on dream interpretation (in *On Divination in Sleep*) aim to provide an explanation for those assumptions. Aristotle incorporates traditional dream hermeneutics into his physiological explanation of dreaming and thereby develops nothing less than a physiological account of metaphorical thought. Specifically, I argue that Aristotle's naturalistic theory of dreaming with its focus on *distortion* is meant to explain the figurative and specifically metaphorical form that is traditionally ascribed to dreams. Interpreting a dream, hence, relies for Aristotle on the same rationale as understanding a figurative expression: recognizing similarities between otherwise different things.

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