This lecture will review Freud's dream theory in the light of recent neuroscientific findings, in order to address the question: is this theory, so fundamental to the whole of psychoanalysis, still scientifically tenable today? When Freud first developed his dream theory, there was essentially nothing known about the brain mechanisms involved. This changed dramatically in the 1950s when the physiological state of REM sleep was discovered. By the 1970s the brain mechanisms of REM sleep had been laid bare. This resulted in a near-complete rejection of Freudian dream theory by the scientific community at large. The reason for this rejection was that the brain mechanisms of REM sleep proved to be completely incompatible with Freud's findings and claims. In the late 1990s, however, new discoveries about the relationship between dreaming and REM sleep and about the brain basis of dreaming led to a fundamental re-appraisal of the scientific viability of Freud's classical model. This lecture, presented by a scientist who was centrally involved in the recent research, will outline the new findings and discuss their implications.

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Reception: Inge Scholz-Strasser
Chairwoman of the Sigmund Freud Foundation

Introduction: Giselher Guttmann
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