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Dreams and Ethics

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Chapter 1 Introduction

A common, almost universal, experience is to have had a dream where you, in the dream, do something immoral. Perhaps the most common of these common dreams is ‘the cheating dream’.¹ In the dream, the dreamer not only has sex with someone who is not their partner but appears to believe, even potentially *know*, that they do have a partner and that they are cheating.² Here are some examples of dream reports, which is a report gathered from the dreamer after the dream, where the agents have had dreams where they cheat on their partner:

For the past few weeks it’s been close to every night I have a dream that I’m cheating on [my boyfriend]. Always with strangers, and usually involves sex. Last night was the first one where I actually felt a deep emotional connection to the person I was cheating on him with.³

and

My girlfriend and I are in a long distance relationship at the moment and actually coping amazingly well however I keep having dreams where I’m fucking another girl. In these dreams I don’t know who the girl is (always someone different but I never recognise the girl) and I’m fully aware that I’m cheating with them, I’m pretty sure I’m enjoying cheating during the dream...⁴

In both these dream reports, we can see that the agents report not only having sex with someone who was not their partner, but they believe that they do have a partner and that they are cheating. A common accompaniment to cheating dreams is the feeling of guilt. In fact, in these two reports both report waking up feeling guilt. In the first, dream she writes: I feel terrible when I wake up and do guilty (sic)...” and the second continues “but I wake up feeling awfully guilty.” It is this guilt that has spurred this thesis onwards: what is guilt and is it appropriately felt in response to some dream actions?

Essential to note now is that the primary interest of this thesis is non-lucid dreams. Lucid dreams may be of moral import, in fact perhaps more obviously so than non-lucid dreams, but that is not the main focus here. There is a reason for this, and it is because this thesis is interested in the implausibility of dream morality. Of the few times that dream morality has been discussed, it has been discussed it has used a *reductio ad absurdum* against arguments or positions that lead to the potential for dream morality. This *reductio* only applies to non-lucid dreaming. The reasons for this are made more evident throughout the thesis. Now, it is important to understand guilt because this guilt squares poorly with the *reductio*: if it is

¹ Bedding Company Leesa found that almost 60% of women have had a dream where they cheat on their partner. Amerisleep surveyed 1,000 Americans and they found that 21% had a cheating dream in the past year. Interestingly, 23% also had a dream where they were being cheated on.

² This contrasts with other sorts of dreams where you have sex with someone who is not your partner, but you do not know, in the dream or perhaps even while dreaming, that you are in a relationship. I will say more on these dreams in the chapters on agency.

³ Posted by Maclover, (2015) on the subreddit r/Dreams.

⁴ Posted by [deleted] (2016) on the subreddit r/AskMen.

the case that dream morality is so implausible why, then, are we so bothered by what we do in our dreams?

R. Jay Wallace understands guilt as a self-regarding sort of blame; as a blame towards oneself.⁵ Wallace's account fits well with modern psychological accounts which understand guilt as an emotion that occurs when someone believes they have violated their own standards of conduct or some moral standard and that they bear some responsibility for that violation.⁶ Guilt, of course, is often misplaced. But is it the case that it is misplaced here? This thesis takes a systematic approach to answering that question. It also seeks to look beyond wrongdoing and guilt: is blame, which is to say other-regarding guilt, ever appropriate for dreamers; is praise or feeling proud ever appropriate; is it the case that blame, guilt, praise or pride are only ever sometimes appropriate? If so, under what conditions? I also ask what precise the object of guilt is: I limit my argument to what I have called dream actions; what the dream protagonist, and on some accounts the dreamer, *does* during the dream. And what are the guilt-making features generally: the internal state of an agent or the systematic consequences brought about by the action? Specifically, what can be said of internal states of dreamers and the consequences of dream actions and dreams themselves?

To answer these questions a series of discussions is essential. This introductory chapter will outline the overall structure of the thesis and give the arguments in a shorthand format. I am also going to go through some key terms required to get one situated in the general topic of dream morality. But before that, it is essential to demotivate a view which, if true, would gutter the project before it starts; I will argue against the view that dreams are not occurrent experiences constituted by mental states.

One view, although, unpopular is that dreams are not constituted by occurrent experiences. This is held by Daniel Dennett and I will demotivate this view in the introduction. After this I will discuss whether we should trust dream reports. I argue that we have some good reasons to trust dream reports, but also that a philosophical exploration of dreaming is impossible without them; so we have pragmatic reasons to trust dream reports since these are essential for inquiry.

First, what is Dennett's view? Daniel Dennett proposes that there is a something that it is like to remember dreaming after awakening but that we have poor reasons to think that dreams are constituted by experiences.⁷ Dennett's cassette theory is that dreams are the result of composition and memory loading

⁵ Wallace (1994)

⁶ See the entry on "Guilt" in the Encyclopedia of Psychology (2008)

⁷ Whether Dennett *really* thinks dreams are not constituted by experiences is by-the-by for his argument. However, for the purposes of this chapter, I am treating Dennett's cassette one as one that sincerely includes the claim that dreamers are not having an experience while dreaming.

processes.⁸ While asleep, Dennett proposes that we compose the dream narrative, but dreamers do not experience the narrative while we sleep. When we awaken, the dream narrative is played back to us. If we imagine the dream as being on a cassette, that cassette has its contents recorded during the dream and then the cassette is played when we wake up. This view is sometimes called the “instantaneous memory insertion” view: we remember the dream narrative we have composed while asleep and it is instantaneously recalled by our brain upon waking up. It is also possible that we can remember narratives recorded in previous sleeps. Dennett argues that the cassette theory has multiple benefits over competing views.

There are two main reasons that Dennett thinks his view is attractive: he claims it explains some anecdotal evidence and claims it explains the scientific evidence parsimoniously.

First, let us discuss the anecdotal evidence beginning with an example: Maury’s dream involving the French Revolution ended with the dream protagonist beheaded. The dream protagonist is the primary character of the dream. Just as this character dies, Maury awoke to find that the headboard of their bed had fallen on his neck.⁹ Maury postulated that the headboard falling on their neck prompted that dream, which was either constructed over this night or over another night since we might have multiple compositions saved, to be loaded in. The cassette theory posits that the best explanation for this dream is that the dream narrative was composed at some earlier instance, and the headboard falling on Maury is what caused that specific dream to be loaded in.¹⁰ These sorts of dreams, Dennett says, are common event where a dream narrative ends and that ending coincides with the real-world cause of the awakening. Examples include a car backfiring coinciding with the dream ending with a gunshot or a gut punch in the dream narrative coinciding with falling out of bed. It would be a marvellous and unlikely coincidence if a coherent narrative ended with a coinciding bit of real-world world stimuli. Dennett argues that it is more likely that we have a bank of narratives and the stimuli that awakens is causally related to the dream we choose to remember. I want to quickly demotivate this.

One cannot deny that there are, at least sometimes, bizarre circumstances where dream narrative and the situation around being woke up coincide but to draw strong conclusions from these would be folly. There are, to start, many cases where one would expect (given the Cassette Theory) that they would have had a certain dream since they woke up a certain way. For instance, there are plenty of times where I have been awoken by a loud noise outside. Very rarely is that reflected in the dream narrative. Secondly, given the work that Rosen¹¹ has done, we have good reason to think that some dream reports are fabricated.¹² I ask what makes more sense: that someone invented a narrative to fit an experience they had

⁸ Dennett discusses this view in two papers: Dennett (1976) and Dennett (1979).

⁹ See Maury (1861).

¹⁰ Dennett also mentions Maury in Dennett (1976) and Dennett (1979).

¹¹ Discussed fully later, but there is little reason to believe that all dream reports are fabricated. Rosen herself does not believe this.

¹² Unwittingly.

or that they loaded up a memory written while asleep? I take this to be an open question, and the fact it is open undermines Dennett's claim that his view offers a better explanation than competing views. These two points also work in conjunction: it could be that these coinciding incidents are often fabricated, and non-fabricated reports show no coincidence. This is not a deathblow to Dennett, but it shows how immediately the cracks start to appear. These cracks are split open further by more recent empirical work.

More recently, though, empirical neuroscience has been used to support the claim that dreams contain experiences.¹³ The arguments are that the (1) neurological state of the brain while experiencing in waking states is sufficiently similar to the neurological state of the brain in sleep states; (2) lucid dreamers – lucid dreams are dreams where the dreamer knows they are dreaming – can communicate in real time with those outside the dream by repeating agreed upon patterns of eye movement; (3) when muscle atonia is not present – muscle atonia is the muscle paralysis present during sleep – agents act out their dreams and this suggests that dreams consist of occurrent experiential brain activity. These are covered throughout the thesis but for now should be sufficient to demotivate the claim that dreams never constitute experiences.¹⁴

Put more succinctly, and to frame the Cassette Theory in terms used throughout the thesis, Dennett denies that dreams are made up of any occurrent attitudes or precepts or emotions. This runs contra to a commonplace understanding of dreaming where agents appear to hold beliefs and experience the world around them and feel in response to that. Dennett's view, however, is unpopular *especially* given recent empirical work.

One might think that Dennett is not *really* pushing for the Cassette Theory being true. Instead, Dennett might be making an argument more akin to Malcolm's verificationist argument; verificationists believe that only claims that are empirically verifiable are cognitively meaningful. Malcolm thinks that the content of a dream is not verifiable, and so he believes that you cannot make the claim that dreams have *any* contents. Here: it means Malcolm believes that dream experience is not verifiable and therefore we should not believe that dreams are constituted by experiences. One reading of Dennett is similar to verificationism: Dennett's argument might not be that the Cassette Theory is true but that the fact that it explains the data at all is a problem for people posing different ontologies: it highlights, Dennett might think, a weakness in other explanations and points to problems one might have with a reliance on dream reports.

¹³ For examples of these studies, and the use of them, see Flanagan (2000); Metzinger (2003); Revonsuo (2006); Rosen (2013); Windt (2013), (2015).

¹⁴ It seems possible that one might read Dennett's view as a sort-of imagination theory of dream where dreams are constituted by imaginative experiences and imaginative attitudes. The only difference, one might think, is that Dennett does not think these are experienced occurrently and are instead experience at the point of awakening. However, as I go on to argue, in order for dream morality to be possible given the imagination view we need occurrency. It is also unclear that this *really is* an imagination view.

This is undermined by arguments similar to those that undermine Dennett. Since Malcolm's writing, a lot of work has been done to improve our ability to produce reliable dream reports and a lot more empirical work has gone into studying the brain while dreaming. The inferences we draw from this newfound and newly interpreted data should move us away from verificationism.

With these two views discussed and dismissed, I now spend the rest of this introduction explaining the structure of the thesis.

While discussed richly in chapters dedicated to them, I will give abbreviated explanations of popular ontologies. The two ontologies which this thesis focuses on are (1) the orthodox – or received – view of dreaming and (2) the imagination theory of dreaming.

One way to aid in understanding the distinction between these views is to examine the distinction between 'in dreaming' and 'while dreaming'. First, an example: let us say that I have gone to bed and fallen asleep in the middle of July in my flat in Glasgow. I begin to dream. In the dream, I find myself climbing Mount Everest. In the dream, I feel the cold against my face and experience the effort required to lift one leg in front of the other. In the dream, I see the surrounding mountains. Once summitting, in the dream I feel immense pride in my accomplishment. What happens, however, while dreaming?

A proponent of the orthodox view would hold that for at least some of the experiences had in dreams that what happens *in the dream* also happens *while dreaming*. They would not hold that you are seeing the mountains, but they do hold that you are having a perceptual experience that is (1) that of seeing the mountains or (2) an experience that is at the time indistinguishable to me of seeing the mountains. They will say similar things to the emotions felt during dreams. They also hold that *in the dream* I had an intention to reach the summit. I also have that intention *while dreaming*. So, put simply, the distinction between what happens in the dream and what happens while dreaming partially collapses if an orthodox account of dreaming is true.¹⁵

A proponent of the imagination view, unsurprisingly, disagrees. They hold that since dreams made up of imagined imagery, they do not believe that you are having perceptual experiences at all. Instead of either seeing Everest or having a perceptual experience that is indistinguishable from reality to you, you imagine Everest. An additional thesis is sometimes made by imagination theorists: not only are the 'perceptual experiences' actually cases of visual imagination, but the internal states featured in the in the dream (for example, the emotions felt or the intentions an agent has) are also imagined. For example, if in the dream I believe that I am climbing Everest the imagination theorist may say that I merely imagine that I am climbing Everest.¹⁶ This would apply to many propositional attitudes, and some argue extends to the

¹⁵ Orthodox accounts of dreaming, as the name suggests, are widespread. For an example of one, see Hobson (1997).

¹⁶ For an example of a theorist who holds to both theses, see Ichikawa (2007, 2009).

emotions felt in dreams. Therefore, contrary to the orthodoxy, there is no collapse between ‘in dreaming’ and ‘while dreaming’.

As stated earlier, these are discussed in depth later in the thesis, but a brief explanation now is hopefully useful in ascertaining what the thesis is about.

In the following two chapters I set about explaining key terms. Firstly, and importantly, we look at lucidity and absurdity. I take it that one might believe that dream morality is a perfectly plausible thesis, but only for lucid dreams or lucid dream actions. In this short chapter, I explain lucid dreaming and begin to discuss the state agents are in. My intention here is to explain some core terms to do with dream, specifically lucidity, as well as continue to motivate against this initial *reductio* claim; that dream morality¹⁷ is so implausible that positions or arguments that entail are made problematic by that entailment.

I continue with some positive arguments against implausibility, albeit in a roundabout way. I take it that the first and most prominent objection, and this is implied by the dream reports examined throughout the thesis, is not that one is incapable of doing wrong in the dream but instead that one is not morally responsible for what one does in the dream *even if* it is capable of being right or wrong. Here, I unpack and counter four reasons one might have for thinking that an agent is not responsible. I argue that these cases are likely true some of the time, and so we have removed certain dreams and dream actions from the pool of our potential candidates for dream morality. But that they are not true *all* the time. My hope is, as well, that by excluding these candidates that dream morality looks plausible: by restricting the focus away from the cases that look obviously implausible again a stronger picture towards plausibility is painted.

Then, I argue that dreamers should not be considered always morally immune. I argue for specific theses here that seem required for moral responsibility. Namely, I argue that dreamers *are* themselves in morally salient ways. I argue that dreamers *do* engage in moral knowledge; they, at least at first blush, appear to be capable of playing the moral game. Some, though, may not be convinced by such arguments. I grant, for the sake of argument, that dreamers are *always* morally incompetent. I focus, then, on two conditions: that dreamers could take steps to avoid certain dream content or certain dream action when that action is predictable and preventable. I then propose that we might be positions of culpable incompetence, sometimes, when we non-lucidly dream. I spend the last sections of this chapter trying to bolster my position against objections.

¹⁷ For non-lucid dreams.

We then return to a discussion on the two premier ontologies, can we ever be said to be morally evaluable for what we do in the dream? I answer ‘yes’, especially given what I have argued about the nature of agency and moral responsibility while dreaming that allows one to be, at least sometimes, the rightful object of moral evaluation while dreaming.

I argue, in the case of the orthodoxy, that it is the case that dreamers would be responsible for their dream actions given (1) moral evaluational internalism or (2) moral evaluational externalism. For defending one, I run through what Cowan has named the standard argument. The conclusion that a combination of internalism and the possibility (and actuality) of moral responsibility while dreaming leads to dream morality is not uncontroversial and takes little additional work to argue for. The conclusion, however, that externalism can lead to dream morality is less of a given. I argue that, however, that dreams may have consequences even if dream actions do not have systematic consequences.

After the discussion on the orthodox view of dreaming and it’s entailment, in conjunction with other theses, of dream morality I argue that the imagination theory is also consistent with dream morality. I explain, in rich detail, three views of the imagination of fantasy – on which surprisingly little has been written – where each is more probable than the last. The ultimate account is my own albeit based on already existing positions. I argue that this account deals with the unintuitive problems the other accounts I discuss fail to talk about. I argue that my account makes sense of both internalist accounts and externalist accounts of moral evaluation: that some fantasy looks (1) internally problematic and (2) could play an important causal role – a moralised causal role – in the production of so moral badness.

The last argumentative chapter of the thesis is focused on what Cowan calls the ‘implausibility thesis’ and what I have called ‘dream absurdity’. Simply, it is the thesis that dream morality is absurd; in fact, as Julia Driver argues in *Dream Immorality*¹⁸, it may be so implausible that holding views that require one endorse the mere possibility of dream morality means there *must* be something incorrect about those views. I argue against Driver’s motivations for the absurdity thesis: she believes that potential for a double life, where one is moral while awake and immoral in their dreams or visa versa, leads to a series of problematic conclusions. I argue this is not possible and does not lead to the conclusions she believes. Driver also takes it as intuitive that dream absurdity is true. I discuss folk and philosophical work that indicates otherwise. While Driver’s arguments are quite easy to work around, I build a positive account for the plausibility of dream morality beyond Driver’s limited arguments. I draw on my work done in the earliest chapters of the thesis as well as my work done discussing new dream ontologies to conclude that not only is dream morality possible and actual, but, tentatively, it does not seem that implausible.

¹⁸ Driver (2007)

By then, we have come full circle. The initial motivating factor for the thesis was this *reductio* that dream morality might pose being at odds with the powerful amount of guilt felt by people in response to their dreams. By then, I hope to given some cases where guilt *does* some appropriate and the *reductio* loses bite.

At the end, I have a short chapter on agency. My intention is to highlight some bizarre outcomes that this thesis has, and to suggest future research paths. I continue this in my conclusion where I suggest more research paths, and reflect on some of the key positions argued for in the thesis.

Chapter 2 Two Ontologies: In Dreaming, While Dreaming, Dream Action and Dream Content

Before heading into the thesis proper, it is essential that we come to understand two key ontologies as well as key terms. The purpose of this chapter is to introduce and explain the orthodox theory of dreaming and the imagination theory of dreaming. I offer some initial motivations for both views which are explored more so later. I also use this chapter to delineate some features of dreaming. Namely, a good account of the difference between in dreaming and while dreaming is essential to the thesis. It is also important to distinguish between what I am calling dream content and dream action. My hope is that with these explained, the rest of the thesis becomes easier to understand and engage with. I end with a discussion on the prospective objects of moral evaluation given these two ontologies. In particular, I distinguish between the dream actions found in the orthodoxy and the dream content found in the imagination theory.

In the previous chapter, I discussed dream skepticism. Dream skepticism is the view that dreams are *not* constituted by any occurrent experiences. The example that most often comes to mind for a dream skepticism view is that of Daniel Dennett who, as we recall, believes that dreams are scribed while asleep and loaded, at the point of awakening, into the conscious mind. This view was demotivated. It should be clear, by now, that the overwhelming most popular view among folk and philosophers is that dreams *are* constituted by occurrent experiences had while asleep. Before discussing the two most popular contemporary views, it is important to unpack what is meant by experience.

There have been many attempts to define and explain experience. It is best to situate them among other experiences so we might understand through contrast: it is often accepted that there are three kinds of mental states: experiences, propositional attitudes, and actions.¹⁹ It is also possible that these three kinds of mental states can amalgamate into other mental states: for instance, it is possible that emotional states are an amalgam of experience and propositional attitudes. Experiences, contra to the other mental states, are defined by their conscious character.

Here is an example of a specific account of experience: Thomas Nagel, and those sympathetic to his view, explains experience as a ‘what it is like’ phenomenon. Nagel’s “what it is like” criterion explains that a bat is conscious because there is something that it is like to be a bat that experiences the world through its senses.²⁰ Experiences are those mental states for which there is something it is like to be in them. They have a conscious phenomenal character. They are also subjective: there is something it is like for *me* to be in an experiential state. Experiences can include perceptual states: there is a what it is like to see a red

¹⁹ See Guttenplan (2005) for an example of a taxonomy that uses this framing.

²⁰ See Nagel (1974).

post box; hear a dog bark; and experiencing pain upon stubbing a toe. Experiencing therefore can take the format of having the phenomenal character X of an object (or possibly a proposition²¹) Y. This phenomenal character is unique to experience and the amalgamated states that experience partly constitutes. While brief, this should give a sufficient understanding of what experiences are.

As said earlier, the most common view, among both experts and non-experts, is that dreams are constituted by experiences. When we talk about dreams, we often talk about the experiences we have had. For example, *Frankenstein* was famously inspired by a dream. Mary Shelly reports that dream:

I saw the pale student of unhallowed arts kneeling beside the thing he had put together. I saw the hideous phantasm of a man stretched out, and then, on the working of some powerful engine, show signs of life, and stir with an uneasy, half-vital motion. Frightful must it be; for supremely frightful would be the effect of any human endeavour to mock the stupendous Creator of the world.²²

Shelly reports that she seemed to see²³ in some detail: she had visual experiences of the machine working and the monster stirring. She also reports an emotional experience: a frightfulness. We see this repeated in most dream reports and it is a natural way to report dreams.

The claim that dreams are constituted by experiences has been met with overwhelming consensus in the philosophical literature, too. This claim is near universally accepted in pre-modern philosophy: Plato, Aristotle, Descartes, Locke, Hume, and Kant, for example, all accept the claim. Pre-modern writings do not discuss whether dreams contain experiences and assume that they do, and they do so without even mentioning the possibility that dreams might not include occurrent experiences. I take this assumption to be grounded in the fact that dreams appear as though they involve experiences. When I wake up, dreams seem as though they involve experiences. I am unable to distinguish how that fear seemed to feel from how waking fear feels when I am awake. In fact, I sometimes awaken from a nightmare where I would report *still* feeling afraid: in such cases I report a continuity of fear. It is not as though I awaken only to report that I was not feeling afraid and now I suddenly am. The argument is simple: if I report that it seemed that I felt an experience, then I have *prima facie* justification that I did feel X. Recall, too, that there has been work done both in studying lucid dreams and studying REM sleep disorders that push these accounts further forward.

²¹An increasingly popular view in recent years is that propositional attitudes have a proprietary phenomenal character to them. I do not want to call these experiences. Rather, I say that if it is the case that propositional attitudes have a proprietary phenomenal character to them then the experiential content of the propositional attitude X is an experience Y.

²² Shelly mentions this in the introduction to *Frankenstein*. See Shelly (1818).

²³ “Seeing” – as I discuss more fully later – is a success word. It is therefore not the case that Shelly sees. Rather, she reports she had a perceptual experience. I will also explain “seeming to see” more fully later. For now, it is only important that we understand that there is an experience. What the experience is will be the focus of a future section.

A view that I put aside for now, but is nonetheless worth mentioning, is that dreams *are themselves* experiences. Windt thinks that what distinguishes dreaming and dreamless sleep is “precisely the sense of spatial and temporal presence in the dream.”²⁴ ²⁵ Windt thinks that dreams necessarily are an experience of an (1) internal, spatiotemporal first-person perspective and (2) the sense of occupying space and the (3) sense of ‘nowness’. She combines these to say that what it is to dream is to be aware of oneself in relation to some space and some time.

Windt uses dream reports to support her theory. She analysed bodiless dreams, which are those dreams in which the person reported that they dreamt without having a body, and she found that the dreamer’s self-experience could be reduced purely to the 3 criteria above. Windt thinks that these are the conditions required for minimal-phenomenal selfhood and that this is the minimum criteria required to be in an experience. Her position, then, is that to dream is to have at least the minimal possible experience. We can expand outwards: Windt thinks these criteria are necessary for one to have other experiences within the dream. We need to have some “I” to which the experiences occur to, some sense of space, and some sense of time. While interesting, this is not required for the thesis but hopefully it helps highlight how far we have come from views like Dennett’s: not only is it the case that practically everyone believes that dreams are constituted by occurrent experiences had while sleeping, but it is also increasingly the case that people believe that dreaming itself is a sort of experience and not merely constituted by experiences.

The Dream Orthodoxy

With the groundwork laid, I now begin my account of dream orthodoxy. Cowan explains the dream orthodoxy view as saying that dreams are “are constituted by sensory experiences, beliefs, emotions, intentions, etc. that are of the same psychological type as those formed in waking life.”²⁶ I want to begin by talking about these sensory experiences. I understand the claim that dreams are constituted by the same sensory experiences as waking life as making two potential claims, and I argue both are more probably true than not: that dreams are constituted hallucinatory experiences and dreams are constituted by illusory experiences.

The most popular view historically has been that sensory experiences in dreams are hallucinations. The popular conception of hallucination – where hallucinations are drug-fueled and wild perceptual experiences – is too narrow. The philosophical definition is that hallucinations include “perceptual experiences, identical in nature to experiences that could be had whilst perceiving the world save only

²⁴ Windt also argues that this is hallucinatory in its nature.

²⁵ Windt (2010: 304)

²⁶ Cowan (2021: 4)

that they are had whilst not perceiving.”²⁷ For example, if I were to hallucinate my computer screen before me, I would have an experience identical²⁸ to the experience I would have had if my screen were actually in front of me. Since, as we have seen, perception is a success term hallucination is not a ‘type’ of perception since perception is successful.²⁹

The traditional view is that dreams involve the same perceptual experiences as waking life. While dreaming, agents have the perceptual experience of seeming to be put with mind-independent objects, but no objects are present. This is one way of characterizing the experiences that constitute dreams. Recall the example of Mary Shelly’s inspiring dream. She reports that she has an experience of “the hideous phantasm of a man stretched out, and then, on the working of some powerful engine, show signs of life, and stir with an uneasy, half-vital motion.” There is the appearance of a mind-independent object, this “phantasm of man”, but no such object exists, and it is not in front of her. Dreams therefore contain hallucinations. This could be the case for veridical dreams, too: I could dream that I was in bed in my room. I could dream of the correct colour of my curtains and the feel of the duvet. This is still a hallucination; I am not actually *seeing* or *feeling* because I am not standing in an appropriate causal relation to an existing object. Instead, I am having a visual experience and a tactile experience. Importantly, it need not be the case that these experiences are one-to-one with their waking counterparts. This leads us a key distinction.

There are strong and weak versions of the hallucination thesis. The strongest version of the hallucination view claims that dreaming and waking experience are identical in the quality of the experience. This is to say that what it is like to see a red postbox in a dream is the same experience as what it is like to see a red postbox in waking life. Some other hallucination theorists hold that dreams are not as rich in detail as waking perceptual experiences. These are holding to the weak thesis. Importantly, as Clark notes, dreamers do not notice that their hallucinatory experience lacks detail and vividness.³⁰ The more popular thesis appears, although this distinction is not one I have seen made explicitly, to be the weaker view.

For now, I wish to discuss two arguments in favour of hallucinatory view. The first, and the most widespread, is the phenomenological argument. After, I briefly discuss modern neuroscientific support.³¹

²⁷ Macpherson (2013: 1)

²⁸ There is a caveat here. It is unclear if the experience has to be identical or merely has to seem identical to the person. Andy Clark, for instance, believes that dreams are *not* constituted by sensory experiences identical to waking sensory experiences. He believes, and this counts as evidence towards us being severely impaired, that we are having a different experience – one that lacks vividness and detail – but that we cannot tell it is different from waking experience.

²⁹ Veridical experiences are those where the visual experience – say of seeing a cup – accurately depict reality. The perceptual experience accurately represents the mug. It can be called “veridical”. However, veridical hallucinations are possible: I could hallucinate my coffee mug in front of me. By chance, that mug is in front of me! So, while I have called hallucinations unsuccessful, they are not necessarily inaccurate.

³⁰ Clark notes dreamers not noticing the dip in quality of experience contrasted to waking life gives is further reason to think dreamers are dramatically impaired.

³¹ There is a third argument: a functionalist-styled argument. This argument is interesting, but I believe it is of better service to the thesis when discussed in the context of arguing *against* sui generis accounts.

The phenomenological argument is best understood through a case study of Descartes' strongest possible hallucination argument. Descartes writes:

it is certain that I seem to see light, hear a noise, and feel heat; this cannot be false, and this is what in me is properly called perceiving³² (*sentire*). (Descartes 1641: II.9)

I take Descartes to be saying that his 'seeming to see' is him having the perceptual experience of the same kind as seeing. He thinks that dreamers are immersed in a fake reality: that the experiences that one has in them are of the same quality as waking experiences and are experienced as reality. While this view is rare, the phenomenological argument is not. Aristotle, Berkeley, Russell, Hume, Dreisback, Barbera and Hobson are examples of philosophers who make this claim but with some variation: they do not all hold that the perceptual experiences had in dreams have the same vividness as the perceptual experiences typical in waking life. The perennial presence of this view speaks to its popularity. Under all these views:

1. Perceptual experiences in waking life have a certain phenomenology.
2. Sensory experiences in dreams are reported to have that same phenomenology.
3. If two experiences are reported as being the same, and we have no reason to doubt that report, we have a reason to think that they are.
4. If we trust dream reports, we have good *prima facie* evidence that the sensory experiences in dreams are the same kind of perceptual experiences had in waking life.
5. We can trust dream reports.
6. We have good *prima facie* evidence that the perceptual experiences in waking life are the same kind of sensory experiences had in dreams.

I have already motivated 4. 1&2 are evidenced by the dream reports of people making these arguments. This argument, I think, is at its best when it is used to establish dreams involving hallucinatory experiences as the default position: the phenomenology argument gives us good reason to think it is *prima facie* true that dreams involve hallucinatory perceptual experiences.

The second argument is a neuroimaging argument. Neuroimaging studies show a parallel between the brain when it undergoes perceptual experiences in waking life and the brain during REM sleep.³³ It has been argued that the hallucinatory nature of dreams is owed to the fact that same parts of the brain³⁴ – the visual and motor areas – are activated in the same way in both waking life and dreaming. Hobson remarks the only difference is that dreams rely on internal stimuli and I have explained that dream experiences do not seem to have the same effect as waking experiences. More recent studies have used neuroimaging to predict objects described in dream reports.³⁵ Take for example that the neuroimaging machine shows the shape of a tall man. When the dreamer wakes up and gives their dream report they say

³² Descartes is using the term differently from how I have used it: he is using it non-factively.

³³ See Dang-Vu et al. (2007), Nir & Tononi (2010), Desseilles et al. (2011).

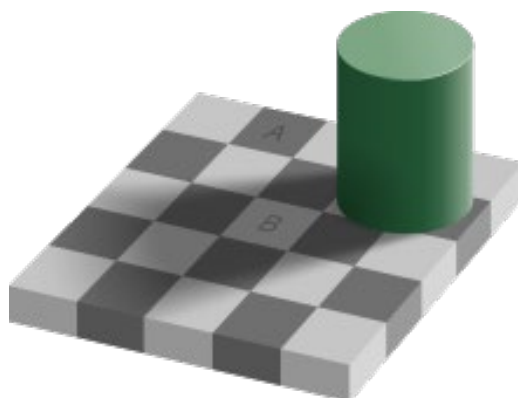
³⁴ See Hobson (1988) and Hobson et al. (2003).

³⁵ See Horikawa et al. (2003).

that they dreamt of their friend Chad who is a 6 foot 4 inches tall man. The claim is therefore that these parts of the brain are responsible for an activity and that part of the brain is activated in both.

Hallucination has often been the focus on the orthodoxy, but there are other ways in which dreams could be constituted by the same sensory experiences, and perhaps even are constituted by the same sensory experiences, as waking life. In this next section I introduce illusion and give reasons to believe that dreams are, at least sometimes, constituted by illusory experiences.

Illusions occur when one perceives an object inaccurately.³⁶ In other words, they involve a misperception of an external object where they have a perceptual experience of that object having different properties than it actually has.³⁷ For example, the checker shadow illusion first published by Edward H. Adelson in 1995:



The image on the left depicts a checkerboard with light squares and dark squares. The illusion is that square A appears darker than square B. However, when examined as a 2D image they have an identical brightness. If you printed this off, they would use the same ink for both squares; and if you analyzed the pixels, they would have the same colour ID code. This can be seen in Figure 2³⁸:



³⁶ This is the standard view of illusions. As Macpherson notes, an alternative view is that illusions are cases of accurate experience, but we form inaccurate beliefs. While Macpherson dismisses this view because it is “not obvious that {this} view should not be more accurately described as one in which there are no illusions...” but in our case one would have to argue that dreams involve accurate perceptual experiences. Even in veridical cases of hallucination, this does not appear to the case: in no views are dreams described as successful perceptual experiences.

³⁷ For comparison, see Smith (2002). Also see Crane & French (2017).

³⁸ Both images are taken from the illusions index and are Copyright Free Use.

Now that we have defined illusions and seen an example, we investigate the view that dreams are constituted by illusory perceptual experiences.

The claim that dreams are illusions is the claim that external stimuli that a person experiences while dreaming (such as a change in temperature; or spraying water on the body; or flashing lights³⁹) are misperceived in the dream as a different perceptual experience. Perceptual experiences in dreams, in the illusion view, have contemporaneous external stimuli. For example, Bergson argued that dreams in which the agent appears to be flying are caused by the sleeping agent realizing their feet are not touching the ground.⁴⁰ I now discuss some more recent support for Bergen's hypothesis.

There are good reasons to think that some perceptual experiences in dreams are illusory.⁴¹ Recent empirical work show that external stimuli can be misinterpreted within dreams. Dreamers have reported experiencing a loud noise that coincides with their alarm going off, or that they reported wearing strange shoes if blood circulation was cut off at the leg.⁴² To be clear: the dreamer accurately perceives the sensations in their feet. They perceive their feet. The 'misperception' occurs when they mistake that sensation of having a clamp around their leg as wearing big, bulky shoes.

There are more arguments already familiar to us as the illusion theorist can use the same arguments the hallucination theorist does. This is because both the hallucination view and the illusion view are taken to argue that dreams are constituted by sensory experience. That is how the dreaming literature, at least, has parsed these views. I will now recount these positions very quickly and explain how they might not support both the hallucination view and the illusion view.

The neuroimaging studies that show a parallel between the brain when it undergoes perceptual experiences in waking life and the brain during REM sleep do not distinguish between illusion and hallucination since both are perceptual experiences.⁴³ The neurological evidence has now been used to support two competing taxonomies but that is because both posit the same experience is happening: that when dreaming, the dreamer has perceptual experience.

However, it might be the case that hallucinations might be more accurately described as being instances of mental imagery.. Modern neuroscience does not seem able to solve this puzzle by itself: there is good reason to believe that the parts of the brain that process imagery also process perception.⁴⁴ Therefore, drawing inductive arguments from brain activity would be unsuccessful here. Conversely,

³⁹ These are odd examples, but they have been chosen because we will refer to them later: they are external stimuli studied by Dement & Wolpert (Dement & Wolpert 1958). There have also been studies with thermal stimuli (Baldrige 1966), electrical stimuli (Koulack 1969), verbal stimuli (Berger 1963) and there have been studies on the effect changing the blood pressure of the dreamer (Nielsen et al. 1995; Sauvageau et al. 1998).

⁴⁰ Bergson (1914)

⁴¹ Remember that I am not treating these claims about what sorts of experience constitute dreams as necessary competitive: it is entirely coherent that if dreams involve perceptual experiences some are hallucinatory, and some are illusory. In fact, both fall under the banner of 'sensory experience'.

⁴² Windt (2018)

⁴³ See Dang-Vu et al. (2007), Nir & Tononi (2010), Desseilles et al. (2011) as examples of such studies.

⁴⁴ O'Craven & Kanwisher (2000)

sometimes in cases of brain damage one loses the ability to imagine as vividly. In such cases, it is not the case that one loses the ability to perceive vividly. This suggests some difference in what parts of the brain are responsible for these faculties. But it is also case that people with aphantasia (people with the inability to visualize mental images) are often able to dream; they retain their ability to dream and are able to have rich perceptual experiences while dreaming.⁴⁵ This continues the pattern of neurological data being unable to definitively support one view over another. Regardless: at this current stage it does not look likely that one can look at a dreaming brain and definitively say that it is having an imagery experience and not a perceptual one or vis versa. I believe the argument from neuroscience is a good argument against the cassette theory but not sophisticated enough to give us reason to prefer an imagery view over a perceptual view.

The argument from phenomenology also supports that dreams are constituted by illusory experiences. The strange shoe example from earlier supports this: dreams are constituted of perceptual experiences; dreamers report that phenomenology. Those perceptual experiences, it has been argued, resulted from a misperception.

There is more to say on the orthodoxy, but I wish to pause now to explain the in dreaming and while dreaming distinction. I will call back to this distinction throughout the thesis and throughout this chapter. So, recall here the in-dreaming and while-dreaming experiences are the same *experience* or at least *appear to be* the same experience. As usual, I will use the mountaineering example. In the dream, one is a mountaineer. They are climbing Everest. Given what has been said about hallucination, and illusion, a proponent of the orthodoxy would say either of two things: (1) under a *strong* view they would say that the person who, in the dream, is climbing Everest is having the sensory experiences of climbing Everest or an Everest-like mountain⁴⁶. In this way, their experience had *in the dream* is the same experience they are having *while dreaming*. Our (2) option is a weaker view: the dreamer is having an experience in the dream which to them appears to be indistinguishable from having a waking experience of the same object. They are, though, mistaken. Their perception lacks vividness or detail. Nonetheless, the experience they have *while dreaming* is the same as the one had *in the dream* here. The ‘collapse’ between the two occurs so long as the orthodoxy is true.

Later in the thesis, I discuss a ‘success’ condition. It is potentially worth flagging here: one might resist the terminology ‘same experience’ in part because ‘seeing’ Everest, one might think, requires that one be standing in the right relationship to Everest. This is clearly not true here. Instead, the focus is on the

⁴⁵ See Whiteley (2020) for more on aphantasia and dreaming specifically.

⁴⁶ The reason I include this Everest-like case is just to allow the strong view to allow for mistakes in hallucination without diminishing their main claim which is about the vividness, richness and quality of the experience had.

phenomenology of the experience. Regardless, the experience had in the dream is the same as the experience had while dreaming, given this view.

Let us continue with our exegesis of the orthodox view. So far, perceptual experiences have been discussed. Now, I wish to discuss non-sensory experiences. Here is a reminder of our previous one sentence explanation of the orthodoxy: dreams are “are constituted by sensory experiences, beliefs, emotions, intentions, etc. that are of the same psychological type as those formed in waking life.”⁴⁷ Namely, I want to talk about emotions here before moving on to discuss propositional attitudes.

The first claim we will examine is that the non-sensory experiences in dreams are the same kind of experiences as those we have in normal waking life. “Normal waking life” is an inelegant expression since we are capable of feeling the other sorts of non-sensory experience carved out in this chapter in ‘normal waking life’. What I understand ‘normal waking life’ to mean is best understood through examples: this is to say that when I feel fear in my dream, I feel the same fear as I do in waking life. Intuitively, this seems to be the case for nightmares – if jolted awake one might report *still* being afraid. There are a few arguments for this: one from folk intuition and language; and another that claims emotions persist into dreams.

The folk understanding, which I think is an argument from language, says that we should trust the intuitive way that we report our dreams. When I have an anxiety dream, I report being anxious. In fact, it could be that I wake up as anxious after an anxious dream; I would report that I am *still* anxious. Plausibly, they think they can establish this view as the default view; one could claim that barring all other evidence, we can trust that natural way that we talk about dreams. The other motivation for this view is that emotions from waking life often persist into and out of dreams.

Persistence, I think, is interesting to remark upon. The dream continuity hypothesis is engaged with later in the thesis more fully because a more central argument depends on it. Briefly, the dream continuity hypothesis is that dream-life is continuous with waking-life: goals, emotions and content from waking life persist into dreams. And, as a different point, sometimes emotions persist *outside* of dreams. For now, though, it is simply enough to engage with what I imagine are commonplace examples. I have a dispositional fear of sharks when awake. In the dream, I have the sensory experience of a shark and I am afraid: the dispositional fear has, plausibly, persisted into the dream. It has become an episodic fear: I am currently experiencing my fear of sharks! The dream, let us say, is so frightful it wakes me up. I wake up startled: before I get my bearings in my room, I would report that I was still afraid of *that* shark in my dream. The argument takes the dream continuity hypothesis as true and says we have good scientific evidence to believe that dream content is influenced by waking content. A proponent of the view dream emotions and waking emotions are of the same kind could posit we have a continuous chain of the same

⁴⁷ Cowan (2021: 4)

emotion: I went to bed afraid, I was afraid when I dreamt, and I woke up afraid. This argument also has the virtue of parsimony especially when contrasted with other accounts: this is a simple account that tracks well with common language.

Again, let us move back to our key distinction between in the dream and while dreaming. For emotional states, given the orthodoxy, it looks to me to be the case that what is experienced in the dream is what is experienced while dreaming. Again, we return to Everest. Let us say that I felt a swell of pride upon reaching the peak *in the dream* followed by a quick pang of fear as I looked over the mountain's edge *in the dream*. The orthodoxy, and with good reason, will say that it is also the case that I had these experiences *while dreaming* as well. The distinction between the two, again for the orthodoxy, as collapsed. We might continue that part of why this collapses is because the object of the emotion – the swell of pride at the accomplishment or the pang of fear at the sensory data of a steep cliff – appear to the dreamer to be real. It would be odd, given the orthodoxy, for us to have either no real emotional response or some alternative emotional response to dream experiences given that dreamers do not know, in non-lucid dreams⁴⁸, that they are dreaming.

The final feature of the orthodoxy worth discussion for this chapter is what propositional attitudes are dreams constituted by. will begin by explaining what propositional attitudes are. A propositional attitude is a mental state held towards a proposition. Propositional attitudes are denoted by a verb. Here are some examples:

- “Peter believes that he can make money trading stocks.”
- “Guillaume intends that he goes to Kempo practice.”
- “Fin judges that Guillaume’s hobbies are healthy.”
- “Jonna desires that she buys a puppy.”⁴⁹

In these examples, the subject has an attitude held towards a proposition. The proposition is a statement that can be taken to be true or false. This is the simplest definition. Our examples of propositions are “Peter can make money trading stocks”, “Guillaume practices later” and “Guillaume’s hobbies are healthy.” These are all truth-apt. I have also given some examples of attitudes: believing, intending, and judging. This is not exhaustive. We can take all propositional attitudes to have the format of “S Φ ’s **that** P” where S is the subject, Φ is the attitude and P is the proposition. In the next section, I will define the attitudes I am interested in by their nature. There are many sorts of propositional attitudes, but I seek to focus in on those that play a key role in the dream literature and in the thesis. So, I focus on desire, belief and intention. I will now give some definitions of the attitudes: for desire, belief and intention. Let us take

⁴⁸ Lucidity is the focus of the upcoming chapter.

⁴⁹ It is possible that desire is not the same ‘kind’ as belief, intention, or judging. I am going to assume it is.

the previous example of “Peter believes that he can make money trading stocks.” The nature of a belief attitude that X means that a person holds it to be true that X: Peter believing that he can make money is Peter holding to be true that he can make money. The nature of desire is a “wanting it to be true”: if Peter desired that he make money then it is the case that Peter wants it to be true that he makes money. I understand judging as doing something and do that something for a reason. Let us take the example of my judging of Sandra’s hobbies. Here, I think about what hobbies Sandra has and if they are healthy. I consider the reasons behind what makes a hobby healthy. I then, in most cases, form a belief as a result of that judgement. I also think it is essential to these attitudes that they play a functional role that identifies them. As a reminder, if functionalism is true then when you locate the functional role of a propositional attitude (with reference to its inputs and outputs) you have located the propositional attitude itself.

Intention is more complex and requires a separate definition. There are three sorts of intention: intention for the future; intention with which someone acts; and intentional action. I am going to define intention as a mental state “in relation to which doing *A* amounts to doing *A* intentionally, or with further intention of doing *B*.”⁵⁰ This unifies the three kinds: let us take the example of my writing this draft now. I am writing with intention which is to say deliberately. I also write now with the intention that the chapter be done within the year: I am doing *A*, the writing now, with the further intention that the draft be finished within an appropriate time frame. In that sense, I am intending for the future. It is also in this sense that I am writing with the intention to put words on the page. However, this definition does not tell us much about the intention itself. It tells us little about the beliefs involved or if desires are important. Regardless, I think we can still employ a functionalist definition: most of what makes intentions morally interesting is their functional relationship to action: intentions to do *X* systematically bring about *X* barring barriers. Intention is often thwarted: sometimes I procrastinate and do not meet my deadline; other times I am unlucky and fail to do what I intended to do. Another barrier could be forgetfulness and another physical restraint. There are a multitude of barriers. This warrants a more detailed discussion further into the thesis. With this definition in place, I now move to discuss the different accounts of propositional attitudes in dreams.

The orthodox account, as we have seen, is that the intentions, desires and beliefs featuring in waking life are of the same type featured in dreams. I wish to explain this through an example and while engaging again with these functionalist lines.

St Augustine, as we have seen already, is worried about his sexual dreams. He insists that in his waking life he does not lust after women or men. He lives happily and chaste. However, this does not appear to be the case in dreams. Augustine seems worried that he might have immoral desires in dreams that lead him acquiescing to immoral acts: ‘Augustine desires that he break his vows to God’ is one way to understand his worry. Augustine, then, seems worried that he has formed a morally wrong desire while

⁵⁰ See Setiya (2018)’s SEP article for this definition.

asleep. Augustine's worry might be supported by a functionalist account. The functional profile of a desire that to break one's vows is plausibly thus: we have the inputs of other beliefs (such as God's vows are not worth keeping in this instance) and we have the outputs (acquiescing to the pleasure).⁵¹ While dreaming, it seems that Augustine has that input and that output. However, I think that even if it is true that Augustine does form a desire of the same kind as waking desires that might be quite rare. Let us take a more mundane example: I have the belief that it is gloomy outside. That relates to other beliefs: that Glasgow is often gloomy; and that my dog would rather go for a walk when it is less gloom and that clouds block the sun. It has inputs constituted mostly by my sensory perception of the outside, and it has outputs: I no longer want to go outside today. But dreams seem to rarely operate in such a way: dream narratives often seem like nonsense where upon awakening I remark that I did things that seemed contradictory to the beliefs I held in the dream. As Ichikawa notes, dream beliefs do not seem to motivate like their waking counterparts. If they do not motivate like their waking counterparts then they have different functional profiles and therefore are not identical beliefs. Cases like these do not hurt the plausibility of St. Augustine's case but they do provoke the question about how common such cases might be. The second supporting argument for this view is that of persistence.

Sosa explains that most of our beliefs, at any given time, remain "latent" (Sosa 2005, 8). Let us take a series of mundane beliefs: I believe that I am awake; and that I am in Scotland; that I recently turned 29 and have been with my partner for over a year. There is an analogy between these beliefs and dispositional emotions. Sosa argues that these beliefs rest in my subconscious. I define subconscious as the part of my mind not currently within my focal awareness. They are only brought to my conscious mind when I "judge or assent or avow" them.⁵² Sosa thinks that I keep countless propositional attitudes in my subconscious while asleep. He writes:

lying in bed until the morning is what one is what one intended through most of the day, even as one thought about other things... That was still one's intention as one lay down, and there is no reason to suppose it was lost as one fell asleep.⁵³

If Sosa is correct, then many of the propositional attitudes we hold in waking life remain present while dreaming. Importantly: beliefs, desires and intentions seem able to have this dispositional quality in dreams, but judgement does not. It could still be the case that I hold a belief latently in waking life and affirm, or judge it to be the case, while dreaming.

So, one last time for the orthodoxy, I wish to call back to the difference between in dreaming and while dreaming with reference to propositional attitudes. The beliefs, desires and intentions had *in the*

⁵¹ I think cases of sleep walking help bolster the functionalist account: part of the long-arm output of desiring to punch is to throw a punch. When the dreamer is not experiencing muscle atonia they do try and throw a punch.

⁵² Sosa (2005: 8)

⁵³ Sosa (2005: 8)

dream are the same as those had *while dreaming*. The mountaineer *in the dream* has beliefs that he is climbing Everest. And so *while dreaming* our dreamer is deceived and is forming false beliefs identical to those had *in the dream*. Remember the content of these beliefs is **not** that one is on Everest *in the dream* but that one is on Everest simplicitor, or on Everest in the real world. The same is said for desire and intention. Those had in the dream are also had *while dreaming*.⁵⁴

With this, we can now have a good account of what dream action might be. I explain dream action as what one does, or attempts to do, in the dream. I take this to be an expression of agency, from a first-person perspective, done by the dreamer. More is done to cache this out later in the thesis, but it follows for now that if one has a dream intention *in the dream* and that intention is also had *while dreaming* then they have done something *in the dream* that they have at least attempted to do, by orthodox lights, *while dreaming*. It is this that I properly call dream action, and that I later distinguish from dream content.

Thus far, we have introduced some key terms and carved out a good and thorough picture of what the orthodox account is. I have motivated these claims as well. The reliance on phenomenology is to be noted, although with more neuroscience being published as well as studies done on those who do not have normal sleep experiences we might come to think that the orthodoxy rightfully deserves its place as the most popular of the views discussed in the thesis. For me, this does not matter. I can be agnostic on dream orthodoxy because part of the goal of this thesis is to show that dream morality looks unavoidable. Now, we move onto the imagination theory. Again, I intend to offer a full explanation. I focus on sensory experience, non-sensory experience such as emotional albeit quickly and then finally on propositional attitudes. As the groundwork has already been laid, this explanation is briefer.

The Imagination Theory

The imagination theory can be carved out in a few ways. The two main ways are as follows: *everything* in the dream is imagined or *at least* the percepts of the dream are imagined. I explore the reasons for preferring one to the other in the chapter dedicated to the imagination theory. For now, I want to carve out what the general picture of the imagination theory looks like.

We begin, as we did before, with sensory experiences and a general understanding of imagination. Ichikawa opts for a minimal conception of imagination, and I am going to use this as the tentpole example in the taxonomy because of pragmatic reasons as it avoids some debate.⁵⁵ Ichikawa posits that when one

⁵⁴ While not discussed in the literature, to the best of my knowledge, one might resist that intentions are the same because they appear to have different success conditions. This runs contrary to the orthodoxy and is explored in more detail later.

⁵⁵ Ichikawa is concerned about what he calls the “imagery debate.” Traditionally visual mental imagery was caused by the presence of picture-like representations, but this view is no longer accepted. I also wish to avoid this debate. I wish to avoid it because it is not within the scope of my thesis.

imagines “there is a genuine experience of mental imagery”⁵⁶. Ichikawa explains that visual imagery, which is an instance of mental imagery, is the kind of experience one undergoes when imagining what something looks like. Visual cases are paradigm, but mental imagery includes auditory, tactile, olfactory, and gustatory. Mental imagery resembles perceptual experience in some ways but is different in others – it has a different functional profile; it is often less vivid or indeterminate; it is often argued to be subject to the will. it has an intentionality: it is *about* or *of* something. There are different kinds of imaginative experiences. This section will distinguish between two kinds: propositional and imagery. For now, imagery. The imagination view is contrasted with our two previous views that dreams are constituted by perceptual experiences. For Ichikawa, dreams are constituted by imaginative experiences. Here is an example: when I dream that I see a cat. Ichikawa thinks that I am having an imagery experience: when I dream I see a cat I am having the same experience I would have had if I had, while awake, imagined that I was seeing a cat.⁵⁷ I have explained the view and now I will give some motivations for it.

There are two arguments I will give in favor of the imagination view: the argument from colour considerations and the argument from neurology. I will also give some plausible counters to these arguments.

The first argument is an argument from colour considerations. Eric Schwitzgebel notes that people who consume black and white media describe themselves as dreaming in black and white.⁵⁸ Modern Americans, who are the groups polled in the two papers, now report themselves dreaming in full colour. The argument is that people dream in an indeterminate colour scheme but then impose the colour scheme the associate with visual imagery onto the dream.⁵⁹ This imposing of colour into a colorless experience, as Schwitzgebel and Ichikawa both report, is what likely happens in cases of imagination since they posit that we imagine in indeterminate colour.⁶⁰ I counter that it is not clear that these empirical studies support this conclusion: why would we think that two experiences sharing one feature makes them the same kind of experience? We would not. This argument is used by Ichikawa as one of many. They, together, are meant to motivate the imagination theory over the hallucination theory. This argument is insufficient on its own but plausibly forms part of a larger abductive argument where the hallucination view has been demotivated.

The second argument is one from neurological development– it argues that as our brains gain the ability to imagine they also gain the ability to dream. David Foulkes argues that dreaming develops in tandem with the ability to imagine visual spatially. This argument concludes that dreams require

⁵⁶ Ichikawa (2009: 105)

⁵⁷ Ichikawa uses the example of a grey cat. See Ichikawa (2009: 107)

⁵⁸ Schwitzgebel 2002’s study has been supported by a further 2006 study by Schwitzgebel, Huang and Zhou.

⁵⁹ Plausibly, this could be some evidence towards the thesis that dreamers know that they are dreaming even in non-lucid dreams. I plan to explore this view in a latter chapter because if we are subconsciously or unconsciously aware that we are dreaming then a view we talk about later – Quasi-Emotions – becomes far more plausible in dreams.

⁶⁰ Ichikawa cites Schwitzgebel’s (2002) paper.

imagination. Proponents of this view link one's ability to imagine with one's ability to dream. Mark Solms finds that damage to the visual processing units in the brain are *not* linked to one's ability to dream whereas the occipito-temporo-parietal junction is essentially linked to dreaming. If that area of the brain is damaged one's ability to dream is reduced or eliminated.⁶¹ This strong correlation between the parts of the brain responsible for the function of dreaming also being responsible for the function of imagining. I have already explained there is good reason to believe that the parts of the brain that process imagery also process perception.⁶² However, I have also provided some reasons to think that there is less of a connection between imagination and dreaming. I repeat: the neurological data is insufficient to form even a powerful abductive argument. Constructing a deductive argument, with the studies that are currently available, is folly.

Let us return to our principle distinction of in the dream and while dreaming. Finally, features have come apart. For the imagination theorist, *in the dream* our stalwart mountaineer is summiting Everest. *In the dream*, our dreamer has the sensory experience of summiting Everest. However, it is no longer the case that *while dreaming* the dreamer is having this experience. Instead of some inaccurate perceptual experience, I am instead having an imagined experience. One might best come to understand the distinction here by themselves looking at some object nearby then closing their eyes and imagining that object. Importantly, and essentially, what is said to be happening *in the dream* – that one is seeing a mountain, feeling its cold winds, and feeling tired as one climbs it – are not those experiences had *while dreaming*. Instead, those experiences are *imagined* while dreaming.

That imagery plays an essential role in dreaming is agreed upon by imagination theorists. Our next short section, by contrast, is ill-explored. The question of emotions in dreams, given the imagination view, is curious. By some lights, the emotions 'experienced' in dreams will themselves be imagined. Our dream mountaineer, upon feeling fear *in the dream*, may only be, *while dreaming*, imagining that they are feeling fear. This is perhaps true for some cases. But I believe that problems of persistence and dream reports rear their heads again. What I believe the proponent of the imagination theorist should say is that, at minimum, dreamers do feel genuine emotional responses *while dreaming* even if these are not one-to-one with the emotions featuring in the dream. There is much, much more to say about this. However, that argumentation is saved for the chapter on the imagination theory. Again, what matters here is that we come to understand the imagination theory better and we come to see where this in dreaming and while dreaming distinction merges and otherwise falls apart.

⁶¹ See Solms (1997) and Solms (2000)

⁶² See O'Craven & Kanwisher (2000)

Finally, I wish to discuss the propositional attitudes had given the imagination view. More recently, a position has emerged that dreams are not constituted by desires, beliefs, judgements, or intentions. Instead, all we do in dreams is propositionally imagine. If propositional attitudes are understood in the format “S Φ ’s **that** P” then all it is possible to do in dreams is imagine that P.

This is argument says that there is an imaginary analog that constitutes the propositional attitudes in dreams. This view, because of the focus in the literature on false beliefs in dreams and skepticism, usually talks only about belief. I am going to expand the discussion to include the rest of the attitudes we are interested in.⁶³ As Ichikawa explains when an agent dreams that *p*, they do not believe {I have added desire and judgement and intention here} *p*. Instead, they are imagining that *p*.⁶⁴ This distinction is phrased similarly by Sosa: Sosa writes it does not follow that when one dreams that they intend that *p*, they intend that *p*.⁶⁵

The first for this position is that imagined propositional attitudes share the same functional profile as dream propositional attitudes. While awake, my imagined propositional attitudes are not connected to perceptual experiences and they do not motivate actions in the same way beliefs systematically do. Instead, they are connected to other pieces of mental imagery and might motivate other imaginings. Ichikawa argues dream propositional attitudes are identical: in the dream, my ‘beliefs’ are not connected to perceptual experiences (for Ichikawa this is because there are no perceptual experiences in dreams) and they do not motivate action.

So, again, we will see the in dreaming and while dreaming come apart. In the dream, it is the case that the dreamer forms many intentions, has many desires and holds many beliefs. It is worth pausing and remembering that the imagination theory will still hold that the dreamer has many intentions, desires and beliefs *while dreaming*. Recall Sosa believes that these become dispositional. The imagination theorist should not be understood as saying *all* beliefs, intentions and desires had *while dreaming* are imagined. Instead, it is about a relation between the *in dream* content and the *while dreaming* attitudes. These may influence dream content. What they are denying is narrower: they deny that those propositional attitudes had *in the dream* are also had *while dreaming*. Instead, the propositional attitudes *in the dream* are instead imagined *while dreaming*.

This concludes the descriptive carving out of these two large views. They are mentioned again and expanded upon in the relevant places throughout the thesis. But they have now been explained, with some motivations given, and importantly we have seen where this important distinction of in dreaming and

⁶³ I have group belief, judgement, desire, and intention together. This is not always the case in the literature on propositional imaginings and dreams. Ichikawa argues that belief in dreams might be like intention in beliefs. It could be the case that some pretend or imaginary beliefs are what constitute dreams *but* desire in dreams is not analogous to imagination.

⁶⁴ See Ichikawa (2009)

⁶⁵ See Sosa (2007)

while dreaming. We have seen where these come apart and how. Now, to close, I want to do two things: I want to offer a better picture of the distinction between what I have called dream action and dream content. I then want to offer some initial suggestions for what, given this explanation of our two key views, we might think is morally interesting.

Broadly, I believe that dreams can be construed of two parts given the orthodoxy and perhaps one part given the imagination theory. I explain this by appealing to a popular metaphor in the literature. The virtual reality metaphor has been used to describe this orthodox account of dreaming.⁶⁶ In such an account, the dream-world is taken to be like a virtual reality: it is a large and populated space within which one can express their agency. We may even incorporate ideas of ‘narrative’ into the world; that is, much like a video game, someone operates within the narrative of the dream world and makes choices and so on. This world, narrative, and content I describe as dream content. It is within this content that orthodox proponents believe that dreamers can perform dream actions. Here, I describe dream actions as what one *does* in the dream and that would be independent of the content; distinct from it. Later in the thesis I discuss ‘authorship’ of the dream, but what is essential right now is that proponents of the orthodoxy do believe that dreamers are, at least sometimes, performing dream actions within dream content. These dream actions are taken to be of the same sort as waking actions: that is they are construed by potentially morally relevant features such as intention. Of course, as we have seen, there is more to say. But for now, *prima facie*, dream actions look to be part of a group of actions that, if we had no other considerations, we would find morally interesting.

This squares nicely with what Cowan explains as dream morality. Cowan explains dream morality as:

sometimes, perhaps only rarely, what we do in non-lucid dreams is the proper object of moral assessment as wrong, right, vicious, virtuous, blameworthy, or praiseworthy.⁶⁷

The reason this squares nicely is that what we do in non-lucid dreams, given the orthodoxy, is the same kind of thing as what we do while awake. In fact, as we have seen, what we do *in the dream* often is what we do *while dreaming*. And so long as someone believes that those features, such as intention, are plausibly of moral import then an initial picture of dream morality under the orthodoxy begins to emerge.

However, distinguishing dream action from dream content is harder to do for the imagination theorist. The virtual reality metaphor cannot be used: instead, we draw analogies to daydreaming. For the imagination theory, what one does *in the dream* is distinct from what one does *while dreaming* in important ways. Dream action looks to be part of the dream content rather than distinct from it. That is because, as dream action has been parsed, it is unclear that dreamers are *doing*, and remember doing is

⁶⁶ See Revonsuo (2006) and Metzinger (2003)

⁶⁷ Cowan (2021: 6)

understood as forming intentions, anything other than imagining and responding emotionally to that imagination while dreaming. Using the same definition of dream morality, then, looks problematic: to say that someone looks morally responsible for what they do in an imaginative experience is *prima facie* difficult to justify. So, instead, I propose a different sort of moral evaluation: is it possible, at least for the imagination theory, that the dream content had could ever be wrong, right, vicious, virtuous, blameworthy, or praiseworthy. This, my hope is, looks more initially plausible. Of course, I defend something akin to this at great length in my chapter focused on the imagination theory.

I understand myself as having done two main things here. The first is that I have taken the two ontologies of dreaming that feature most prominently in this thesis and explained them. In doing so, I have also offered an explanation of some key concepts: in dreaming, while dreaming, dream action and dream content. These relate to each other in interesting ways. I also take myself to have, secondly, begun to work at moving away from the implausibility thesis by pointing to features that, given either ontology, would be of moral interest if had while awake. This claim is modest, but as we start to move throughout the thesis I will continue to try and build for the plausibility of dream morality. The next hurdle also requires explanation of a new core concept: lucid dreaming. The worry I imagine one might have is that only lucid dreamers, by virtue of what lucidity is, who could do right or wrong, or be described as having done right or wrong by having a dream. I rebel against this quickly next, and then more indirectly in the chapter on responsibility.

Chapter 3 Lucidity and Absurdity

The primary interest of this thesis is the potential for the moral responsibility of non-lucid dreams. This invites, I think, a preliminary worry: one might think that, by definition, we cannot be responsible for non-lucid dream actions given that they spawn from non-lucid agents. In this chapter, I give a pre-definition argument as one I imagine one might have as an initial reaction to my focusing on non-lucid dreaming. I define and explain both lucid and non-lucid dreaming. I then go above and beyond the barebones definition and explain some of the key features of lucid dreaming as it contrasts with non-lucid dreaming. We then return to the argument at hand: I posit, and give good initial reasons to think, that non-lucid dreamers are not trivially immune to moral assessment.

In a sentence, I imagine an argument one might have is: since lucid dreaming is marked by lucidity and one might think that lucidity is required for moral agency, then agents, *prima facie*, could be morally responsible for what they do in *lucid* dreams. By contrast, and as the name suggests, non-lucid dreams are marked by a *lack* of lucidity it potentially follows that non-lucid dreams had by non-lucid dreamers are not of moral import.

So, what are lucid dreams? The most modest definition, that is the most stripped back, is that lucid dreams are dreams where the dreamer realizes they are dreaming. There are two things to note about the term ‘lucid dreaming.’ First, it is not the dream that is lucid, it describes the dreamer. Second, while the term ‘lucid dream’ originates with Frederik van Eeden, we can find examples of people explaining lucid dream as far back as antiquity. Here is van Eeden:

...the reintegration of the psychic functions is so complete that the sleeper remembers day-life and his own condition, reaches a state of perfect awareness, and is able to direct his attention, and to attempt different acts of free volition.⁶⁸

And here is, for an example, Aristotle⁶⁹:

often when one is asleep, there is something in consciousness which declares that what then presents itself is but a dream.⁷⁰⁷¹

Even from van Eeden, we can see the explanation of lucid dreaming stretch beyond the barebones definition of coming to know that one is dreaming. In particular, van Eeden discusses increased awareness, an increased ability direct attention and increased autobiographical memory. Before

⁶⁸ (Van Eeden 1913: 149)

⁶⁹ For eastern examples, see (Padmasambhava 1998)

⁷⁰ (Aristotle 1941: 624)

⁷¹ Both Aristotle and Padmasambhava cited by (Baird et al. 2019)

discussing these, I want to pause briefly to share how we come to know about the condition of lucid dreamers.

The negative case, that is that lucid dreaming just does not happen, is worth mentioning. Sartre, for instance, seems to think that recognizing one is in a dream is sufficient to terminate the dream. There are some reasons to think that attempting to exert too much control, for instance running contrary to the dream narrative by trying to ‘magic up’ objects or people, can terminate the dream. However, given the overwhelming evidence for lucid dreams – from real-time signaling lucidity to measured neurobiological changes combined with dream reports – positions like Sartre’s unpopular and almost certainly false. This evidence comes *after* Sartre writes and also comes after many dream skeptics. Recall, as I mentioned elsewhere in the thesis, that some philosophers have denied that *any* dream is an occurrent experience.⁷²

So, what is the evidence that lucid dreams are real? I quickly discuss two methods of verification. The historic “gold standard”⁷³ is the first. Around 1980⁷⁴, the “first validation of lucid dreaming as an objectively verifiable phenomenon occurring during rapid eye movement sleep”⁷⁵ is recorded. The methodology was as follows: prior to sleeping, dreamers and researchers agreed upon a series of eye movements that the dreamer would perform once they began to lucid dream. For example, up, up, down, down, left, right, left, right. This can be seen by researchers and then cooperated by dream reports. The second methodology involves these signals, but now incorporates different measurements from electrooculograms. This allows for more precise measurements and studying: for instance, one can measure brain activity while certain tasks are performed while lucid dreaming as the agent can signal that they have started the task and when they have finished it. Once the dreamer has confirmed they are lucid dreaming, new technology allows researchers to measure a variety of differences in brain activity. I now unpack the consequences of some of those changes. The state non-lucid dreamers find themselves in is unpacked richly in the next chapter, but marking the difference now is important for establishing the difference between lucid and non-lucid dreamers.

The first difference between lucid dreamers and non-lucid dreamers is that lucid dreamers have better autobiographical memory. Consider a typical non-lucid dreaming case. Let us say that I am dreaming that I am climbing a mountain. The sheer wind is cold, and I am soldiering uphill. At no point

⁷² Also, as a reminder, it is possible to understand some of these dream skeptics as drawing our attention towards how reliant we are on dream reports which themselves are not always reliable. I set this aside for now as it is discussed later.

⁷³ This is the language used by (Baird, Mota-Rolim & Dresler 2019). Their paper “The Cognitive Neuroscience of Lucid Dreaming” offers an excellent exegesis of lucid dreaming, how we study it and the neuroscience behind it. While this thesis avoids some of the hard science, I do take some conclusions from this paper and papers like it.

⁷⁴ Two seminal studies come from (Hearne 1978) and (LaBerge et al 1981)

⁷⁵ (Baird, Mota-Rolim & Dresler 2019)

do I reflect that I was, only thirty minutes ago (in fact, potentially seconds ago by own perception) that I was clambering into bed. It does not occur to me that I am a PhD student, and in fact I might even deny it if asked in the dream, instead of a mountain climber. There are other such cases where non-lucid dreamers lack autobiographical memory: people often forget they are in a relationship; forget if they have children; or, in one case from actress Helena Bonham Carter, that she can not give birth to an oven-ready chicken. We forget, in normal non-lucid cases, a wide berth of personal information. Or at least, that is the intuition. As is discussed later, Sosa believes that it is not the case that we *lose* these beliefs about ourselves but rather that they are buried deep within us when we sleep and that we can no longer access. Regardless, having significant absences (or not having access to) autobiographical memory is a hallmark of non-lucid dreaming. My contrast, lucid dreamers report having far greater access to autobiographical facts. In a typical lucid dreaming case, the dreamer will know who they are, what their job is, their relationship status and so on.⁷⁶

In normal cases of non-lucid dreaming, agents often report a lack of cognitive ability. This is broad, but I take it that agents often struggle to focus, or think fully, or engage critically with the narrative they are experiencing. Colloquially, dreamers rarely notice the circumstances they are in are ‘odd’. The mountain climbing case is clear evidence of this. Additionally, as is discussed later in the thesis, non-lucid dreamers seem unable to solve problems in the dream or even focus their attention, often times, towards any individual feature of the dream. Here is Rosen explaining non-lucid dreams similarly to how I have:

though, as Ichikawa argues, this is not the usual way memories are forgotten and replaced when we are awake, the dream state does not necessarily emulate ‘usual’ waking cognition. Memory and other cognitive deficits in dreams can lead to the acceptance of unusual scenarios and the belief that the dream is real. Dreamers may believe they are being chased by a lion while dreaming, despite recently believing, possibility only a few minutes earlier, that they were lying in bed.⁷⁷

As Rosen notes, and is worth noting generally, is that not all dream beliefs are bizarre. It is just the bizarre, accompanied by the lack of recognition of the bizarre, speaks to a cognitive decief when compared to waking cognition. This is all engaged with at length in the next chapter. Colloquial evidence is sufficient for now. By contrast, lucid dreamers report cognitive ability similar to the abilities they have while awake. Here is Rosen:

⁷⁶ (Windt & Metzinger 2007)

⁷⁷ (Rosen 2021)

...studies have shown that dreaming is highly varied in terms of cognitive ability—dreamers can be utterly cognitively impaired or, especially in lucid dreams, maintain their waking cognitive abilities.⁷⁸

Part of this cognitive ability, I take it, is the ability to act or exercise volition. In non-lucid dreams, we might think this is often lack the ability to exercise volition, or that it is handicapped considerably. Here is Solms who describes dreaming as:

hallucination, delusion, disorientation, negative affect, **attenuated volition**, and confabulatory paramnesia.⁷⁹

Hobson, as another example, has not compared dreaming to psychosis but said that it is a psychosis!

Given this, we would expect attenuated volition. But this is not always the case. Here is an example:

But the person I was fighting was faceless, but I know it was one of her friends. They stabbed me first. And I managed to get my hands on their knife. I eventually overpowered them and cut them deep.

They died. I said to my daughter "I'm so sorry" as I took her dying friend over to her so she could say goodbye.

She looked at me with such hatred and disgust. She said "go away" and I left. That's where the dream/nightmare stopped⁸⁰

In cases like this dream report, we do see people reporting an agency. In fact, we might think that the phenomenology of dreams is that we often *do* feel like we are exercising volition. This is discussed later, but for now it is important to remark that while some non-lucid dreams appear to have limited, or missing, volition the same is less true for lucid dreams.

But perhaps the most famous and interesting part of lucid dreams is not just that agents report the ability to exercise their volition more fully, but they report that they the ability to exercise control *over* the dream. Lucid dreamers can, sometimes, control the narrative of the dream. There are limits to this: they must 'interact' with the narrative otherwise they risk waking up or having not having their intention be successful. For instance, say I was lucidly dreaming that I was climbing Everest. I wanted a camera to take a photo. Trying to 'magic' the camera into my hands from nothing would likely be unsuccessful. However, finding a camera by checking my rucksack or having a fellow climber give me one would likely be successful.

⁷⁸ (Rosen 2021)

⁷⁹ (Solms 2000 : 848) My emphasis.

⁸⁰ Posted by u/ConversationTime5307 (2023) in the subreddit r/DreamInterpretation.

So far, then, I have given an account of lucid dreaming and reported the state that lucid dreamers find themselves in. I have offered some initial contrast, although the most morally relevant features are explored richly in different chapters. Let us, now that we have a better understanding of lucid dreaming, return to the initial argument: given the moniker ‘lucid dreaming’ we might be worried that dream morality, for non-lucid dreams, is obviously absurd.

The argument, as I have understood it, is that non-lucid dreams are *defined* by characteristics that would render dreamers immune to moral assessment. Namely, that non-lucid dreamers do not will dream content or action, almost by definition. However, this is likely untrue. Let us examine what Cowan calls the standard argument. While the first half of this thesis focuses on the state dreamers are in and how to get to moral responsibility, for now it is important to focus on *how* dreamers act.

Given this account, dreamers **do** perform actions. They do exert their will. Still, one might persist that there are additional considerations. I address four of those now before moving onto arguing that dreamers *would be* morally assessable for what they do in dreams with the assumption that what they do in dreams *could be* morally assessed.

Chapter 4 Dream Irresponsibility; 4 Cases

In the previous chapter, and in the introduction, I put to bed some preliminary arguments against dream morality and as well as introduced some important terms. Specifically, I argued against Daniel Dennette's view that dreams are not things in which dreaming actions *really* do anything. I also clarified the sort of moral assessment this thesis aims at: something beyond mere goodness and badness but likely not as serious as waking blameworthiness and likely *does not require* the external moral correction that comes with blame i.e. public shaming. Now, the substantive argumentation of the thesis can begin. In this chapter, I wish to highlight cases where one is *not* responsible for what they have done in the dream. I do this for a multitude of reasons. It is worthwhile, I think, to delineate the cases we are interested in away from the cases we are not. This helps with, as noted prior, with getting intuitions 'on-side'. Also, by using Robert Cowan's paper as a scaffold, we can start to understand the conditions required for moral responsibility in dreaming by looking at cases where moral responsibility is absent. Finally, there is another important rhetorical point to having this chapter early: when introducing the prospect of dream morality to someone, inevitably their first response is to say "well, that is not me." Explaining what that argumentative line looks like, as well as some others, and arguing additionally, that there are cases where this objection looks *clearly* false ought to – again – make the project appear less implausible.

We begin with Cowan. Cowan gives us four positions one might hold that would mean that an agent might avoid moral responsibility – that is always be immune to moral assessment for what they do – in the dream. He writes:

we can distinguish four types of defeater for the moral assessment of a dreamer: (1) dreamers are always absent from their dreams, and hence they don't do anything; (2) dreamers are present in dreams but their waking characters are never manifested while dreaming, hence actions in dreams can't really be attributed to them; (3) dreamers are always rationally incompetent, and hence are never blameworthy; (4) dreamers always lack agency and hence don't do anything.⁸¹

Cowan does little, as it is not within the purview of his paper, to motivate each of these. In this chapter, I plan to motivate these and then argue against them. In particular, I want to give cases where these theses look true for *some* dreams but not all dreams.

After this, I highlight what these cases are *missing* for agents being morally responsible for what they do in their dreams. I posit that what is missing is that, in these cases, agents are missing at least one of the following: the agents must perform an action⁸²; that action must be attributable to them; they must be 'competent' when performing the action **or** be competent at the point where they could have reasonably taken steps to avoid action. At the end of this chapter, I reiterate these in slightly more depth before

⁸¹ Cowan (2021: 5). Cowan does not defend the no special condition thesis since that is not the focus of his paper.

⁸² In the realm of 'actions', I include (for now) some plausibly morally assessable attitude, for instance an intention.

offering a new and positive account for the potential of moral responsibility for actions performed in the dream in the following chapter.

Dreamers are Always Absent from Their Dreams, and Hence They Do Not Do Anything

I propose there are two ways to understand this claim: (1) straightforwardly that dreamers are never present in their dream and perform more actions and (2) more modestly that we are not in a position to accurately judge if dreamers are ever present in dreams. This aligns with the two readings of the arguments put forward by Dennett and Rosen.

Recall, Dennett argues that his Cassette Theory of Dreaming offers an explanation that is at least as good if not better than orthodox accounts of dream. His Cassette Theory of Dreams holds that dreams are ‘scribed’ or ‘recorded’ while we dream; the narrative the dream is made while dreaming. But we do not experience that narrative while dreaming. Instead, at the point of awakening, Dennett believes that we ‘pick’ one of these reconstructed narratives and load that into our memory. So, since dreams are not these occurrent experiences in which dreamers believe, desire, etc, then we can say dreamers are always absent from their dream and it is only the dream ‘character’ that does something.

The strict verificationist lines Dennett proposes are unpopular and rightly so. As illustrated in the previous chapter, we have good reason to think that dreamers are present in their dreams at least some of the time and we can see evidence for this in a myriad of case work. See the last chapter for more information.

Rosen proposes a similar line: Rosen has done empirical work and puts forward that a substantial portion of dream reports are fabricated or have fabricated content. Rosen argues, and this information is reiterated and expanded upon extensively in the a future chapter, that in particular (1) nonsense components of the dream narrative are played down and (2) agents often misreport their sense of agency. Rosen’s line is *not* that all dream reports are fabricated or that dreamers *never* have a sense of agency. But, I can see how a skeptic might think that Rosen’s argument leads to another issue:

However, a different issue presents itself: if dream reports are unreliable when it comes to even the most basic features such as narrative content and even one’s sense of agency then how can we draw *any* conclusions from dream reports? In previous chapters, I have given some plausible answers to this: (1) there are some good reasons to trust dream reports are at least sometimes accurate with regard to REM sleep disorder; (2) we can infer some degree of accuracy given evidence gathered from lucid dreams; (3)

for practical reasons, we need dream reports to be at least somewhat trustworthy. While (3) will not sate a committed skeptic, (1) and (2) ought to.

So, we have good reasons to doubt that dreamers are *never* present in dreams. But are there cases where dreamers are *sometimes* not present in their dreams? It is unclear but I propose that some non-REM⁸³ sleep dreams may be candidates for when an agent is absent. Contra REM dreams, non-REM dreams are characterized as “conceptual” and “thought-like” and have been argued to have been without the narrative component often found in REM dreams.⁸⁴ It seems plausible that dreamers could be ‘absent’ in these dreams in the same way one might be absent from wandering thoughts. As such, non-REM dreams might be (stepping aside from the ongoing empirical debate) poor candidates for dream morality.

There are, potentially, other cases where dreamers are absent. One set of cases, and the last I briefly discuss, are vicarious dreams. Vicarious dreams are dreams where you dream of being someone else. Rosen and Sutton use the example of someone dreaming that they are Napoleon. They discuss vicarious dreams as still being from the first-person perspective but not from the perspective of the dreamer themselves. Similar to how a daydreamer might be thought of as ‘absent’ when they imagine they *are* Napoleon watching his famous victory at Austerlitz, the same may be true for vicarious dreams. At least for now, vicarious dreams are set to the side. Later in the thesis, I discuss vicarious dreams and I discuss pretend play. As Amy Kind argues, pretend-play could be wrong for a variety of reasons beyond what play tells us about character. But I save that conversation for a more relevant place.

This has only been a sketch of what dreams we think the dreamer *may* be absent in *some of the time*. In order to void the no special condition thesis – and to avoid dream morality altogether – a stronger commitment would be required: that dreamers are *never* present. This claim is nichely held and I have demotivated it.

The next claim is more commonly held. Still, I will introduce it; demotivate it; and offer potential candidates for dreams we ought to avoid where it is true.

Waking Characters are Never Manifested While Dreaming, hence Actions in Dreams Cannot Really Be Attributed to Them

⁸³ As a reminder, Rapid Eye Movement (REM) sleep is the sleep most commonly linked with dreaming. It is characterized by rapid eye movement, muscle atonia and specific brain activity. Non-REM sleeping is characterized by a lack of eye movement, less muscle weakness and different, but still specific, brain activity. For now, the difference in brain activity does not matter. What matters is the different characteristics dreaming has when had during each activity.

⁸⁴ Much of this is in contention. Some have questioned the qualitative differences between dreams had in these two different sleep states. Others have questioned if specific qualities might come from errors in collecting dream reports. See Martin et al. (2020) for a brief but collated discussion.

To discuss this claim, I am going to give an account of character. I am going to take that account and use it to show how someone might think this supports the claim that waking characters are never manifested while dreaming.

The account I have chosen is Parfit's account of psychological connectedness. There are other accounts, for instance a biological accounts and further fact accounts, but psychological accounts are by far the most popular.⁸⁵ I am not defending this view:

*X at t_1 is the same person as Y at t_2 if and only if X is uniquely psychologically continuous with Y, where psychological continuity consists in overlapping chains of strong psychological connectedness, itself consisting in significant numbers of direct psychological connections like memories, intentions, beliefs/goals/desires, and similarity of character.*⁸⁶

While awake, I have a series of mental states and propositional attitudes: I hold many beliefs, desires, intentions, memories, character traits and so on. We can imagine, at each instant, that these form a mental loop. A small change in these – say I lose a belief – forms a new loop and the loop is chained to the first; I remain psychologically connected. The psychological theorist argues that so long as I have this chain of psychology continuity then I am the same person. Here is a waking example: Phineas Gage famously had his skull pierced by a railway spike. After the accident, Phineas Gage's friends and family reported that he was “no longer Gage”. Gage became “intolerable to decent people”.⁸⁷ Before, he was described as energetic and clever. After the accident, he is described as a gross lay about who followed his desires with no consideration for others. Martyn says that it seemed as though the balance between man and animal had been destroyed. Proponents of the psychological view can report that the Phineas Gage from before the accident is not the same person as the Gage after the accident. Gage before the accident had a set of beliefs around etiquette and how to behave around friends and family; he had a set of desires including the desire that he hold a job; and he had a certain dispositions. This all seems to have changed the moment part of his brain was obliterated: the psychological theorist argues that the continuity has been broken.

There has been work that suggests a similar break in continuity is happening when we dream. For example, it seems that I lose the belief that I am in bed; in Glasgow; sometimes that it is night. I lose all many of my of beliefs – and the evidence for this is that I accept my new dream scenario uncritically. When I dream that I am climbing Everest I never think to myself “but I was just in Glasgow?!”⁸⁸ There also seems to be a change in my general character: the analogy between dreaming and madness has a long

⁸⁵ See the PhilSurvey 2020 results page for a full breakdown.

⁸⁶ Parfit (1984: 207)

⁸⁷ See both Martyn (1868) and Bigelow (1868) for descriptions of Gage's character.

⁸⁸ In earlier sections, I have talked about how some values and some beliefs look as though they are retained in dreams. It is not contradictory to say that there is evidence that we lose some capacities and some beliefs while dreaming, while retaining other beliefs and values and capacities. The question relevant to thesis is: “is enough retained for moral responsibility?”

history and more recently Andy Clark, in his paper *The Twisted Matrix: Dream, Simulation, or Hybrid?*, argues chemical changes in the brain are so drastic that if they were to happen to a waking person it would be as though they were going through a psychotic episode.⁸⁹ Nir and Tononi make a milder claim: while dreaming the frontal part of the brain which is responsible for logic, emotional control, plot/narrative, planning and self-reflection has severely reduced activity.⁹⁰ It appears all these properties I have while awake are gone when I sleep and are gone suddenly. Someone could argue that there is a strong enough difference to constitute a breaking of the continuous chain of personhood. The psychologist theorist can therefore make the argument that dream protagonist and the dreamer are not the same person.

There has been some good work done that combats this conclusion that we our waking characters are never manifest and that work coincides nicely with Parfit's. The first question to ask is 'how many of our dispositions, memories, etc (those features that make up our characters) are *actually* absent?' Sosa argues that it is less than it might first appear. About beliefs specifically he writes:

Lying in bed until the morning is what one intended through most of the day, even as one thought about other things, as one had dinner, etc. That was still one's intention as one lay down, and there is no reason to suppose that it was lost as one fell asleep. One does not lose one's intentions.⁹¹ ⁹²

So, under this account, we might have reasons to think the psychological chains *are not* broken since the *vast majority* of those character-making internal features are *not* missing. They either persist or become dispositional rather than occurrent.

One might pause and question: why think this is true? I am going to give two reasons. The first reason is that it seems to make good sense of the state we find ourselves in when we wake up. Imagine that it was the case that you dramatically lost a significant amount of our character-making features when we slept. How is it the case that they come back to us when we awaken? It would not be the case of recalling, but rather a case of reforming these character-making features! It does not seem like I need to relearn that I am in Glasgow, or my age, or even my values. Instead, it seems as though I recall them from my own mind. In this way, Sosa's account seems to better fit with the lived experience of dreamers. The second reason one might have to think that our waking characters often persist into dreams is the dream continuity hypothesis.⁹³ The dream continuity hypothesis is, very briefly, the hypothesis that our waking

⁸⁹ Clark (2005)

⁹⁰ See Nir & Tononi (2010).

⁹¹ Sosa (2005: 8-9)

⁹² Important here, and this is remarked upon more deeply in a later chapter, is the distinction between occurrent and dispositional beliefs. Occurrent beliefs are those beliefs held in the forefront of your mind – for example I *currently* have the belief that I am typing on a keyboard – and dispositional beliefs are those you are not currently affirming. An example of a dispositional belief I have right now is my birthday is July 12th.

⁹³ Again, this is discussed in more depth later in the thesis.

lives are continuous in significant ways to our dream lives. This being true, and the extensive empirical work gives us good reason to think it is true, would mean that we again have good reason to think those character-making features can and do persist since they inform other parts of the dream readily, specifically narrative and action.

But this is not to say that our waking characters are *always* manifest in dreams. Again, we can point to vicarious dreams as prime candidates. But we might also think dreams where we do things that are wildly out of character are candidates for cases where – obviously – our waking character is not manifested in the dream. For example, take yourself to be someone who would never cheat on their partner. In the dream, you cheat on your partner. This, *prima facie*, seems to give us evidence that your waking character *was not* manifest!

But contrast this with many cases of potential dream immorality; it really *does* seem in character and perhaps that is why we seem so worried about them. Recall Augustine: Augustine's guilt not only comes from what he does, but because he sees it as a real reflection of desires he has and really does see himself as 'doing' something. These cases, and not cases where one acts out of character, are good initial candidates for moral responsibility for dreaming.⁹⁴

Dreamers are Always Rationally Incompetent, and Hence Never Blameworthy

There is much to say about this in particular. Firstly, it does not seem to invalidate the conditions from dream morality set out by Cowan himself. Secondly, it looks false. After looking at why it is false, we have to ask two different questions about whether dreamers are (1) always acting *in* rational incompetence and (2) if dreamers are always acting *from* rational incompetence. This difference is essential to moral evaluation.

Cowan marks out rationally incompetence as something that could mean that one is never blameworthy. But it is worth noting that this thesis does not invalidate the no special condition thesis. As a reminder, the no special condition thesis is:

Non-lucid dreamers are not always in a special condition rendering them immune from moral assessment.⁹⁵

And, as a reminder, Cowan explains dream morality as:

⁹⁴ There is something to be said for dreamers, and waking agents, to be unsure of their characters. Colloquially, my partner and I have both awoken from dreams and wondered "would I ever do that?" or "could I ever do that?" So, it could be that a dream action *appear* out of character but is actually not. Similarly, we might think that we would never do an action sober, but then we do it drunk. It is an open question whether this comes from your character, or if that matters. See the chapter on moral responsibility for more on this topic.

⁹⁵ Cowan (2021:5)

Sometimes, perhaps only rarely, what we do in non-lucid dreams is the proper object of moral assessment as wrong, right vicious, virtuous, blameworthy *or* praiseworthy.⁹⁶

So, one could always be rationally incompetent but still be judged as doing something bad or wrong or vicious. They could just not be held as blameworthy.

Important to note is that this third thesis – that if a dreamer is always rationally incompetent they are never blameworthy – is likely untrue. To understand why, one can look at acting *in* incompetence and *from* incompetence. The best way to illustrate the difference, I have found, is to use counterfactual examples. Let us imagine that Barney is having a sordid affair. He cheats on his partner regularly. He does so sober and in sane mind. There are no morally mitigating circumstances. Barney, afterwards, gets very drunk but without his consent. He is poisoned and unwittingly rendered very drunk. He continues the affair that night while drunk. He is so drunk that is rightfully explained as incompetent. But it does not seem he avoids blame here: in fact, it seems like we would have done the same thing sober as evidenced by previous action. While drunk, he was acting *in* incompetence. But not *from* incompetence. If Barney was drugged and had an affair that he otherwise would not have had, then he seems to be acting *in* incompetence. In these cases, he escapes blame. In previous instance, he does not.

So, are dreamers always acting *in* incompetence; that is are dreamers *always* incompetent? We have some reason to think so. As we have seen⁹⁷, agents are in a severely altered state while dreaming. This is commonly likened to being in a psychotic state. We know that brain activity is dramatically different from what we would expect from a normal waking experience and we know is dramatically different in a way that effects an agent's ability to be rational. There are also different accounts of moral responsibility that may avoid this discussion in its entirety. For example, see attributionism. Attributionists understand someone to be morally responsible if their action, or trait, or propositional attitude is "attributable to an agent for the purposes of moral assessment".⁹⁸ Different philosophers take this to mean different things⁹⁹: Scanlon thinks this attributability is when an action comes from "judgement sensitive attitudes"¹⁰⁰; Smith argues it has to reflect "evaluative judgements"¹⁰¹; and Hieronymi thinks it has to come from an agent's "moral personality"^{102 103} Key to the attributionist view is that agents are held responsible even if (1) the belief or character was shaped under duress; (2) if the

⁹⁶ Cowan (2021:6), also my emphasis on "or".

⁹⁷ Clark (2005), Nir & Tononi (2010), Hobson (1999).

⁹⁸ Talbert (2022)

⁹⁹ So much so that Talbert remarks that the view is new enough and the range of views the term purports to encompass is large enough that we might worry about the use of the term. See Talbert in Nelkin and Pereboom.

¹⁰⁰ See Scanlon (1998).

¹⁰¹ See Smith (2005).

¹⁰² See Hieronymi (2008).

¹⁰³ See Talbert (2022).

object of moral evaluation was not under their control; (3) and even if the agent cannot be expected to comprehend the moral status of their action or trait or attitude. Talbert writes “attributionists tend to reject both the claim that you are morally responsible *only* for what is under your voluntary control, as well as the claim that you are responsible wrongdoing *only if* you could have responded to the moral considerations that spoke against your behavior.”¹⁰⁴ Plausibly, attributionists do not care about rational competence, or at least it is not a necessary condition for the view. Discussing the pros and cons of is beyond the scope of this chapter, but carving the space out is not.

In contrast to attributionism, other views put emphasis on moral competence which may require specific sorts of rationality.¹⁰⁵ For instance, it might be the case that one must be able to reason to the good and from the good to be competent. Other views also discuss acting from one’s ‘true’¹⁰⁶ and one may not be one’s true self in dreams.

For now, and to circumvent this discussion, I grant that dreamers might always be rationally incompetent. But this is incomplete: it must also be the case that dreamers, in order to always avoid blameworthiness, always act *from* incompetence.

Given the sorts of cases we have seen and will come to see, this hypothesis remains *very* unlikely. Similar things to what has been said about character can be repeated here: agents, at least sometimes, seem to do things in their dreams that they would do (given similar or identical circumstances) while awake. There is more to be said here, but I believe that showing that it is acting from, and not in, incompetence that matters makes dream morality *prima facie* more likely. Rhetorically, this point is good to make early.

Dreamers Always Lack Agency and Hence Do Not Do Anything

In this section, I discuss the final option. I begin by discussing the plausible ways that a dreamer *can* express agency. This gives a better picture of what it looks like for an agent *not to* express agency. I conclude that the support for this thesis is similar to the support for thesis one.

There are numerous ways in which an agent can plausibly be seen to express agency in a dream.¹⁰⁷ Under orthodox accounts, agents seem to form beliefs; intentions; desires and so on. Plausibly, they even attempt to act. Under imaginative accounts, it could be the case that dreamers are still forming

¹⁰⁴ Talbert (2022: 2)

¹⁰⁵ See Levy for more.

¹⁰⁶ See Susan Wolf.

¹⁰⁷ There are lots of accounts of agency. Hieronymi (2009), for instance, thinks we express agency whenever we decide to believe something. Others put a greater focus on intentional action. For instance, see Anscombe (1957) and Davidson (1963) for tentpole discussions on agency that focus on intentionality.

beliefs; intentions; desires and so on.¹⁰⁸ There is intuitive support to this view: agents often report that they were *doing* things in their dreams. They seem to report that they had agency and, at minimum, attempted to express it. This attempting to express agency is likely sufficient for moral assessment.

There are two ways someone could claim that dreamers always lack agency and they identical to those reasons found in support of thesis one. Someone seeking to deny that dreamers ever have agency in dreamers could again appeal to Dennett's view: if the cassette theory were true then dreamers do not have any agency. While dreaming, a narrative is discussed around the dreamer. Secondly, if one held the dreamer to be passive. Instead, the character in the dream expresses agency. Brian O'Shaughnessy gives an account of dreaming where dreamers are passive agents. He argues that dreamers are not conscious. Instead, he writes that they are imagining a consciousness. O'Shaughnessy explains:

[Waking] consciousness necessitates an overall mental activeness, for the reason that the conscious are in control of the overall movement of their own minds, and the dream is an essentially inactive phenomenon.¹⁰⁹

O'Shaughnessy believes that waking consciousness has a distinct character that is different from the character of dreaming consciousness. Part of that character is an activeness. By activeness, O'Shaughnessy seems to think that a waking consciousness is a stream of thoughts and attitudes and so on. This is absent in dreaming. Soteriou, while explaining O'Shaughnessy, writes:

we now understand dreaming as an essentially inactive phenomenon that involves seeming-to-be-active. According to that understanding, when one dreams, one undergoes passive episodes of imagining, at least some of which involve imagining oneself to be active.¹¹⁰

O'Shaughnessy gives interesting points in support. He argues that dreaming "depends" on the dreamer being non-conscious. O'Shaughnessy's account of waking consciousness is such that it is defined by active thinking and perceptual sensitivity and an ability to engineer our mental future. O'Shaughnessy writes that these would disrupt sleep and are simply not present in dreaming.¹¹¹ O'Shaughnessy concludes his paper say:

Dreaming is thus a strange mirroring of consciousness, wherein each element in the latter finds in the former a reflection in which its character is inverted, including the very World given to awareness... reason becoming unreason, mental activeness inactiveness, knowledge error, perception imagination, Reality Unreality...¹¹²

There is much to say here in response. For space, I focus on one preliminary objection. As we have seen previously with muscle atonia cases, dreamers *do* seem to be expressing agency. In these cases, if a

¹⁰⁸ While implausible, some might think that responding to fiction is still an expression of agency.

¹⁰⁹ O'Shaughnessy (2002: 426)

¹¹⁰ Soteriou (2020: 5330)

¹¹¹ O'Shaughnessy (2002: 429)

¹¹² O'Shaughnessy (2002: 430)

dreamer does not experience muscle atonia, we see them act out in a way that looks ill-described as imagined agency. A thorough analysis of the functional profile of dreaming and this seeming-to-be consciousness (and if this could lead to action) would be required to understand if this voided the no special condition thesis.

Still, and to be clear, there might be candidates of dreaming where agents do not really do anything. Recall what was said about non-REM sleep. non-REM dreams are characterized as “conceptual” and “thought-like” and have been argued to have been without the narrative component often found in REM dreams.¹¹³ If one lacks agency, it seems as though they might never really *do* anything. Similarly, one could contend that one never really *does* anything in a vicarious dream. However, it seems one might be nonetheless responsible for the avatar’s actions. For now, I am content to push these aside as fringe cases that are not of interest to the thesis.

What Are These Accounts Missing?

As touched upon earlier, it is my belief that by unpacking these cases where dreams *would* lack moral responsibility, we are able to produce an initial list of desired features for moral responsibility. By looking at Cowan’s (1) and (2), we see that it needs to be the case that the actions performed by the dreaming agent need to be appropriately attributable¹¹⁴ to them. Tentatively, we can say that these actions need to come from the agent’s character in much the same way the a waking agent’s actions need to come from their character.¹¹⁵ For (3), one might put pressure on the claim that dreamers are *always* rationally incompetent is sufficient to vanish the possibility of moral responsibility. Instead, they might be acting *in* incompetence rather than *from it*. I offer, additionally, a different line of argument: so long as the action can be ‘traced’ back to a time where the agent *was* competent, their state while they perform the action does not matter. An additional consideration, and one that I think is intuitive, is that we likely want the agent to have been able to have done otherwise had they taken appropriate steps to either avoid wrongdoing or promote rightdoing. Finally, from (4) there needs to be some agency involved. I touched on an account of dreaming where systematically lack agency, and while this is not discussed in the next chapter it is brought up later in the thesis. For now, I take it that I have offered some initial reasons to dislike the view and that is sufficient.

¹¹³ Much of this is in contention. Some have questioned the qualitative differences between dreams had in these two different sleep states. Others have questioned if specific qualities might come from errors in collecting dream reports. See Martin et al. (2020) for a brief but collated discussion.

¹¹⁴ What exactly this means, whether it is a high bar or a low bar, is discussed in the next chapter.

¹¹⁵ Attributionists, however, offer a far more permissive account of what is required for moral responsibility. Again, discussed later in the thesis.

Concluding

This has been a short chapter whose purpose is to understand the sorts of initial objections someone might have to dream morality. I have used Cowan's list as a way to analyze some of the reasons people may believe are true and may believe void the potential for dream morality. I have argued against such cases as being universal, but have tried to show that there are cases where the thesis may be true for specific or rare dreams. By doing so, I hope to draw into frame the sorts of dreams we are interested in.

In the next chapter, I lay out a cohesive and positive account for what I believe to be a good account of cases where dreamers are *morally responsible* and *blameworthy* for what they do in the dream.

[Structural differences between REM and non-REM dream reports assessed by graph analysis - PMC \(nih.gov\)](#)

Chapter 5 Are Dreamers Always Immune to Moral Assessment?

Thou hast commanded me to abstain from concubinage; and as to marriage itself, Thou hast advised something better than Thou hast allowed. And because Thou didst give it, it was done; and that before I became a dispenser of Thy sacrament. But there still exist in my memory—of which I have spoken much—the images of such things as my habits had fixed there; and these rush into my thoughts, though strengthless, when I am awake; but in sleep they do so not only so as to give pleasure, but even to obtain consent, and what very nearly resembles reality. Yea, to such an extent prevails the illusion of the image, both in my soul and in my flesh, that the false persuade me, when sleeping, unto that which the true are not able when waking. Am I not myself at that time, O Lord my God?¹¹⁶

This passage, taken from Saint Augustine's *Confessions*, introduces us to the topic of the chapter. At first blush, Augustine seems to believe that he is doing something wrong in his dreams and seems to think he is not immune to moral judgement for that wrongdoing. I return to this quote from Augustine later.

In this chapter, I argue that the no special condition thesis is true. The no special condition thesis is that “non-lucid dreamers are not always in a special condition rendering them immune from moral assessment.”^{117 118} This chapter is split into sections. In the first section, I explain the conditions that dreamers find themselves in while dreaming. I then discuss moral responsibility with a focus on agent's understanding and engaging with moral knowledge to be morally competent. I look at cases where agents appear to be morally competent while performing dream actions. However, there are reasons to doubt the legitimacy of these cases. In step with Cowan, I argue that even if agents are not morally competent in these cases, they might still be morally responsible. However, out-of-step with Cowan, I argue that there might be other ways that we could be responsible for what we do while dreaming. I posit the cases Cowan thinks are most probable candidates for cases where agents are morally responsible are not cases that we think of when we think of dream morality. I offer an account of moral responsibility for dreamers that captures paradigm cases better.

The no special condition thesis, which features in Cowan's ‘The Standard Argument’ for dream morality, is his last thesis of the argument. Out of step with him, I believe it is important address the no special condition thesis first. Moral responsibility is the least intuitive part of the argument therefore is rhetorically important to deal with first. Importantly, for now, I am also assuming that the orthodoxy is true for much of this chapter. This is in step with Cowan and Driver, whose arguments I build upon. But little that is said here would *only* apply to the orthodoxy. The imagination theory is reflected upon later.

¹¹⁶ Augustine (1991: X.30)

¹¹⁷ Cowan (2021: 5)

Before moving into this chapter properly, it is important to offer an initial account of agency as well as the scope of the no special condition thesis. Interestingly, there has not been much made in depth discussion of moral agency in dreams. Cowan avoids the discussion by instead proposing a conditional that *if* dreamers express agency, then responsibility for non-lucid dreams is possible.¹¹⁹ Driver does not give a singular account of agency and instead writes:

Though dreams can be very vivid and realistic some may question whether or not agency can truly be expressed in dreams. It seems to me that it can be so expressed, and that it is possible for an agent to have mental states while dreaming.¹²⁰

This seems to be motivated mostly by phenomenology. She combats what she calls a spectator account of dreaming, which holds that no will is exerted while dreaming, by saying:

However, while some dreams may conform to this spectator description, other ones are ones which the agent is acting – is doing things in the dream and making real choices in the dream. Certainly, the phenomenology of dream choice or action and the choice or action in the actual world can be identical.¹²¹

Driver continues that *it is true* that dreamers, in normal dreaming conditions, seem to fail to express agency. Take a pre-philosophical account of agency: it seems that I need to have (1) some kind of belief or intention that I then (2) instantiate deliberately. That would be, it seems, an expression of agency. It would seem that dreamers fail to do this: in waking cases I would express agency in kicking a football by having some intention, having that intention ‘work’ by getting me to move and then having the football move as well. There is, then, intuitively a ‘success’ condition built into agency that seems absent in dreams: it is not the case that when, in the dream, I kick the football that my legs move at all *while dreaming*.

But Driver protests: she says that *in the dream* I have the intention. She also adds that we also have “whatever we view as important for agency”¹²² – she cites reason responsiveness dreamers can, and sometimes do, exhibit in dreams. She also mentions the ability to make choices and “exhibit various motivational structures.”¹²³

This is motivated by two similar lines of argumentation. The conclusion to both is that there is more to agency than moving one’s body. She gives the example of a paralyzed person. They are completely unable to move. She believes that this paralyzed person *is* an agent and can express agency. She also thinks that if they could not express agency, or were not an agent, then they could never do anything wrong. But this, she reasons, is absurd. She does not motivate this beyond intuition, but I believe a quick

¹¹⁹ Cowan (2023, 2)

¹²⁰ Driver (2007, 5)

¹²¹ Driver (2007, 10)

¹²² Driver (2007, 9)

¹²³ Driver (2007, 10)

example could illustrate this well: if the paralyzed person formed intentions to harm someone, and really actually tried to, but failed because of their paralysis we would not find that morally innocuous. Especially if they had forgotten they were paralyzed. “Bodily movement”, she writes, “should not be a requirement of agency”. The second case she posits are virtual reality or brain-in-a-vat styled cases: agents believe they are acting in the real world: they do what Driver thinks is important in that they form intentions and attempt to act on those intentions. If it were the case that I was a brain-in-a-vat, it does not seem to follow that I have lived a morally neutral life or never performed something morally evaluable. The success condition, she thinks, looks moot.

I believe there are two ways to understand Driver’s view here. The first potential way is likely the intended way: dreamers can and do sometimes express agency because they meet certain conditions like having an intention, being responsive to reasons, etc. The second way, and perhaps an unintended way, is her saying that a discussion of agency is unrequired because we have the conditions for ‘moral responsibility’ already.

For now, I follow Driver’s suit. Given the received view, it is intuitively the case that dreamers express agency – or something sufficiently like agency – while dreaming. Later in thesis, I return to a discussion on agency. I ponder three accounts of agency and see if their adoption would pose new issue for the thesis.

It is important to note the scope of the no special condition thesis. The most robust judgement we can make on a person or action is that they are blameworthy or praiseworthy. This seems to entail that they were fully aware and competent of what they were doing. Below that rung, agents still seem capable of doing right and wrong without being praiseworthy or blameworthy. For instance, if I was extremely generous only while drunk it seems as though I have done something right when I donate to charity but that I am not praiseworthy for it.¹²⁴ Lastly, ethicists often talk about events or states of affairs as or systems good or bad. For instance, someone might think unfairness is bad and that systems that lead to unfairness are therefore bad. The little literature that has been on dream morality has focused on blameworthiness (see Cowan 2023 as an example), but this chapter will sometimes talk about the ‘lower’ rungs of moral evaluation.¹²⁵

¹²⁴ There are mitigating circumstances here. Perhaps I choose to get drunk knowing I will give to charity, but let’s say that is not the case with this example.

¹²⁵ This distinction is important for multiple reasons. The first is clarity, but the second concerns how the standard argument has been employed before. Driver, for instance, uses the standard argument *against* the internalist because she believes it forces the internalist to embrace an absurd conclusion: dream morality! I discuss absurdity in another chapter, but it is worth highlighting now that dream morality looks more palatable if agents are assessable for doing right and wrong but are perhaps not blameworthy or praiseworthy.

Plausibly, there is an intuitive case for the no special condition thesis being true: people often report feeling guilty after their dreams. This is evidenced in online message boards¹²⁶ and there are some discussions within Catholic tradition.^{127 128} People seem to see their guilt as an appropriate response to their dream actions and this either comes from or informs the belief their dream actions are sometimes wrong.¹²⁹ For many people, at least *prima facie*, dream actions¹³⁰ look to be proper object of evaluation. However, for others the no special condition thesis looks *obviously* wrong! While little has been written on the no special condition thesis, my understanding having engaged with others on this topic is that people find it implausible because we really do seem severely diminished while dreaming. In this next section, I discuss what that altered state is.

What are We Like When We Dream?

In this section, I discuss agency and dreams: what are agents like when they dream and how does that contrast from how agents are when awake; and then end with a discussion on the self in dreams. I begin with Rosen's paper *I'm Thinking Your Thoughts While I Sleep*.

Rosen starts by explaining that an agent's sense of agency is a "primary aspect of the self."¹³¹ A sense of agency is "the experience of a particular movement or mental event as realizing one's own agency."¹³² A sense of agency is considered essential for what makes me *me* and you *you*. If our sense of agency is seriously undermined, we often think of ourselves as different people and, given caveats, not responsible for what we do. As Rosen explains, disruption to someone's sense of agency is typical for someone who is experiencing some mental illness. This disruption can manifest in many ways; for example, someone with schizophrenia often experiences what Rosen calls "thought insertions": voices or thoughts that seem, to the agent, to have their source as external to the agent.¹³³ Another feature thought to undermine one's sense of agency, or more minimally often accompanies a diminished sense of agency, is auditory hallucinations. While auditory hallucinations are explained as "self-generated thoughts [that] are interpreted as externally generated sounds or voices but "heard" as if from the inside."¹³⁴ While thought insertions lead to a loss in a sense of agency, auditory hallucinations typically accompany a loss in a sense of agency.

¹²⁶ See Quora and Reddit. For example, [Do dreams ever make you feel guilty?](#)

¹²⁷ See Saint Augustine's *Confessions* for one example. See Wei 2012 for more.

¹²⁸ I do not mean to imply this is only discussed by Catholics or that only Catholics are committed to dream morality. But it is interesting to note that of the little written on this, much of it is from or about Catholics.

¹²⁹ It could be that they wake up and feel guilty. It is because of this emotional response that they then form the belief that they have done something wrong.

¹³⁰ Here and throughout, I use "dream actions" to mean either those actions we take in dreams given the orthodoxy or the action of imagining the dream consistent with the imagination theory of dreams.

¹³¹ Rosen (2015 : 2)

¹³² Rosen (2015 : 2), Bayne (2011)

¹³³ Rosen (2015 : 3)

¹³⁴ Rosen (2015 : 4)

Rosen cites McNamara et al:

many people report a sense of helplessness when being chased in dreams for example. On the other hand, the dream self typically has some thing or object toward which he or she is striving, thus indicating some sense of agency or purpose.¹³⁵

Here, we see that while a sense of agency often seems absent or diminished but not always. Specifically, McNamara et al. bring to the forefront a type of dream where the dreamer is working towards something. These seem indicative of a sense of agency. The idea that dreamers could have a wide range of senses of agency is mirrored elsewhere. For instance, Occhionero et al. write:

the dreamer can be a simple passive observer of the oneiric scene, an active participant, as well he/she can have a double role, an altered presence, or he/she can be embodied in other people or objects of the dream, and so on.¹³⁶

So, the popular account of agency in dreams seems to be that the sense of agency we have varies massively, but a sense of agency is in many dreams. This is evidenced by dream reports. Rosen, in contrast, gives us reason to think this sense of agency is perhaps over reported: she argues that thought insertion and auditory hallucinations are underreported because of “poor attention, metacognition, and memory in dreams.”¹³⁷ She also reports that dream reports are somewhat biased against agents accurately recalling these features of the dream: for instance, Foulkes found that agents often rationalized (and therefore inaccurately reported) parts of the dream that seemed bizarre. Foulkes also found that people sometimes downright omit bizarre features of their dream.¹³⁸ It seems plausible to me that a lack of agency *is* bizarre especially given that we do not know we are in a state where we would expect to lack agency. And so, it seems possible to me that a lack of agency is underreported as are many other bizarre features of dreams.

Is this a reason to think that our sense of agency is systematically diminished but underreported? I do not believe so: it gives us good reason to think that a sense of agency is more often lacking than it is reported to be but anything stronger looks to be extremely contentious and against powerful phenomenology. Agents really do report having a sense of agency in some dreams.

I’ve previously discussed dream reports, but I wish to quickly discuss them here again. Someone might respond that those features reported in dreams – for instance poor cognition and memory – are those features that make dream reports unreliable. This is likely true, but if dream reports are unreliable then we cannot depend on them as evidence that we systematically lack a sense of agency.

¹³⁵ McNamara et al. (2007 : 7)

¹³⁶ Occhionero et al. (2005 : 76)

¹³⁷ Rosen (2015: 38)

¹³⁸ Foulkes (1979), Foulkes (1999) & Rosen (2015). By bizarre features, people most often mean dream content and dream narrative.

This is only relevant to the no special condition thesis if we believe that an agent needs to be able to express agency in the dream while performing those actions in the dream that we are interested in. I go onto discuss this. However, I want to make a quick caveat for the imagination theory of dreaming. It seems possible – given the account I gave in a previous chapter – that a lack of a sense of agency is not important for moral evaluation since what is being evaluated is a combination of the dream content and the dreamer’s reaction to it. In a waking case, if someone imagines some morally reprehensible thing and responds inappropriately to it, then it seems irrelevant to whether they felt a sense of agency. In fact, the kind of passivity described that seems typical of a lack of a sense of agency would be expected in some morally problematic fantasies e.g., imagining some children writhing in pain does not seem to require, or even have, a sense of agency within the imagination. The upshot of this brief discussion on the imagination theory is that even if it were not the case that dreamers seem to express agency in their dream, this intuitively would not undermine our ability to morally judge them as fantasists.

The second paper I wish to discuss is Andy Clark’s *The Twisted Matrix: Dream, Simulation or Hybrid?* Clark’s paper expands on a point well summarized by Hobson. Hobson writes:

What is the difference between my dreams and madness? What is the difference between my dream experience and the waking experience of someone who is psychotic, demented or just plain crazy? In terms of the nature of the experience, there is none.¹³⁹

Hobson can be seen here as saying that dreamers are severely altered from their waking selves. His comparisons are to psychosis and madness. Similarly, Clark writes:

in our dreams, we are not in control... normal sensory input is blocked, attentional capacities are impaired or lost, memory is distorted, reasoning and logic are weakened, narratives run wild, self-reflection is dampened or destroyed, emotion and instinct are hyperstimulated and forms of ‘top down’ willed control and decision-making diluted and easily overwhelmed.¹⁴⁰

While the quote from Hobson emphasizes the sheer ‘craziness’ of dreams, Clark’s quote seeks to give us the criteria for that craziness. He continues by explaining normal, waking brain chemistry. To understand the contrast, we must understand amines and cholines. Amines are neurotransmitters that are essential to processes which let us directly focus on things; reason; and make decisions¹⁴¹. Cholines, such as acetylcholine, also play a variety of roles. Acetylcholine, as an example, is a chemical that motor neurons use to activate muscles. Acetylcholine is also the chief chemical in activating fight or flight responses. Cholines, more generally, play key roles in memory, arousal, and motivation.¹⁴² Put broadly, cholines and

¹³⁹ Hobson (1999: 5)

¹⁴⁰ Clark (2004: 1)

¹⁴¹ Clark (2004 : 7)

¹⁴² Kapalka (2010)

amines (and the balance between them) dictate how we respond to external and internal stimuli.¹⁴³ In waking life, amines dominate and because of this we can function ‘normally’: we are able to engage with the world rationally and are alert. However, if awake, when amines are not dominant and cholines take over we “experience delusions and hallucinations.”¹⁴⁴ It is also the case that when the balance of chemicals favours the cholines, we become far more emotional and “judgement wanes.”¹⁴⁵ In waking life, there is a large range of ratios of cholines and amines that are healthy. However, straying away from this range leads to changes in behaviour and thought processes. To emphasize: if there is a moderate imbalance then someone would be acting *in a state* that is very different from normal. It is possible that one would still act in a way that is normal, although it is more likely that they would act in ways different from what we would expect.¹⁴⁶

There is not merely an imbalance in dream states. Instead, “the aminergic system are totally deactivated and the cholinergic hyperactive.”¹⁴⁷ This leads to dreamers being in a dramatically altered state. Clark writes: “Only extreme forms of psychosis or serious medical or recreational drug use can induce this kind of state in non-sleeping humans.”¹⁴⁸ Some of the consequences of this shift in balance¹⁴⁹ are that REM dreamers display “amnesia, hallucinations, bizarre mentation, anxiety and loss of volition control.”¹⁵⁰ Not only is it the case that dreamers look to be in an analogous state to severely drugged waking agents because of neurotransmitter imbalance, but it is also the case that blood flow in the sleeping brain is dramatically different from waking cases.

Clark notes that this imbalance is “matched” by a shift in blood flow from the dorsolateral prefrontal cortex to the subcortical limbic structures. The dorsolateral prefrontal cortex (DLPFC) is the brain area associated with “executive control functions”¹⁵¹ such as managing tasks, inhibition control, planning and memory.¹⁵² Recently, general activity in the DLPFC has been linked to general intelligence.¹⁵³ The subcortical limbic structures, (SCLS) by contrast, are in control of emotions, instinct, pleasure, and motivation¹⁵⁴. While dreamers REM sleep, blood floods away from the DLPFC and into the SCLS. The result of this dramatic change mimics the result of the neurotransmitter change.

¹⁴³ Clark (2004: 8)

¹⁴⁴ Clark (2004: 8)

¹⁴⁵ Clark (2004: 8)

¹⁴⁶ This is important: just because someone is acting *in* a state does not mean they are acting *from* that state. As Cowan notes, dreamers might act *in ignorance* but not *from ignorance*. This effects culpability. See Cowan (2023) for more.

¹⁴⁷ Clark (2004: 8)

¹⁴⁸ Clark (2004: 8)

¹⁴⁹ As Clark notes, healthy people do not have a complete, or almost complete, aminergic dominance. Balance is considered healthy and ‘ideal’.

¹⁵⁰ Hobson (1999: 91)

¹⁵¹ Hertrich et al. (2021: 2)

¹⁵² Badre & Wagner (2004), Hart et al. (2013) Brunoni & Vanderhasselt (2014)

¹⁵³ Duncan (2013), Chen et al. (2020)

¹⁵⁴ So linked to motivation that hyperactivity in the SCLS is linked to addiction.

Clark concludes that dreamers are in a state with decreased intellectual ability and rational ability compared to their waking selves. Their ability to critically reason is severely diminished. Beyond that, they are hyperemotional with only a small amount of the self-control we would expect from waking agents. Clark uses this empirical work to conclude that dreams are *not* like a simulation but instead claims that we are simply too impeded to notice it is not like a simulation¹⁵⁵.¹⁵⁶ The conclusion of his work is that dreamers are *so* diminished that they mistake the dream world for reality which is something less diminished agents would not do.

It is worth summarizing this briefly and clearly: dreamers are in a state severely different from their normal waking states. They are less rational; worse at planning; worse at controlling their inhibitions; and perhaps even less intelligent. They are more emotional; more instinctual and more likely to have their wills overwhelmed¹⁵⁷. The change from a waking agent to a dreamer is so drastic that to mimic it in waking life an agent would have to take extremely strong drugs or be experiencing a powerful psychotic episode.

However, it is not obviously the case that dreamers can *never* perform the tasks linked to the areas of the brain with decreased activity. For example, there are numerous examples of people purporting solving problems in their dreams and then hurriedly jotting down the solution after they have woken up. While interesting, I do not think these constitute sufficient evidence to believe agents *actually* solve problems in the dream. Elias Howe, inventor of the modern sewing machine, claims that the solution came to him in a dream.¹⁵⁸ The account I give comes from a chronicle of a family's history entitled *The Bemis History and Genealogy: Being an Account, in Greater Part, of the Descendants of Joseph Bemis of Watertown, Massachusetts*.

He almost beggared himself before he discovered where the eye of the needle of the sewing machine should be located. It is probable that there are very few persons who know how it came about. His original idea was to follow the model of the ordinary needle, and have the eye at the heel. It never occurred to him that it should be placed near the point, and he might have failed altogether if he had not dreamed he was building a sewing machine for a savage king in a strange country. Just as in his actual waking experience, he was perplexed about the needle's eye. He thought the king gave him twenty-four hours in which to complete the machine and make it sew. If not finished in that time death was to be the punishment. Howe worked and worked, and puzzled, and finally gave it up. Then he thought he was taken out to be executed. He noticed that the warriors carried spears that were pierced near the head.

¹⁵⁵ Clark is arguing against what is called the 'Virtual Reality' model of dreaming.

¹⁵⁶ Clark (2004: 9)

¹⁵⁷ This is a term Clark uses. I understand him as saying that we might have some higher will (like a desire to do the right thing) that is overwhelmed by baser wills (like the desire for immediate pleasure) and that the higher will is more easily overridden by the baser will.

¹⁵⁸ There are many other anecdotal examples. For instance, Jonathan Ichikawa reports that he has solved maths problems in his dreams and had to write them down upon waking up.

Instantly came the solution of the difficulty, and while the inventor was begging for time he awoke. It was 4 o'clock in the morning. He jumped out of bed, ran to his workshop, and by 9, a needle with an eye at the point had been rudely modelled. After that it was easy. That is the true story of an important incident the invention of the sewing machine.¹⁵⁹

In Howe's dream, it appears that he solves the problem in the dream. This contrasts to similar dream reports. For instance, see August Kekulé's famous dream:

Again the atoms were gamboling before my eyes. This time the smaller groups kept modestly in the background. My mental eye, rendered more acute by the repeated visions of the kind, could now distinguish larger structures of manifold conformation: long rows, sometimes more closely fitted together; all twining and twisting in snake-like motion. But look! What was that? One of the snakes had seized hold of its own tail, and the form whirled mockingly before my eyes.

As if by a flash of lightning I awoke; and this time also I spent the rest of the night in working out the consequences of the hypothesis.¹⁶⁰

In Kekulé's dream, it seems as though he solves the problem because of his dream. Vague imagery aids or inspires Kekulé. One might think that Kekulé's dream, and Howe's dream are on par: Someone could instead say it is not the case that one *really* solves a problem in the dream. Instead, they solve the problem at some other point and the solution is *presented to them* in the dream.

There is intuitive support to the idea that these people are not *really* solving the problem in their dream. If Howe was to spring awake and immediately declare he had solved the problem we would be skeptical. It appears another step is required for Howe to accurately claim to have solved the problem: perhaps modelling it on paper or creating a prototype. Imagine a similar scenario: I am walking my dog and I, absent mindedly, finally crack the problem central to challenging chapter in the thesis while walking along. It seems peculiar to say that I have solved the problem without going home and writing it all down or testing the solution more consciously. More accurately, it seems as though a prospective solution is presented to me and that I must do work to see if it is a successful solution. I understand this line of reasoning to give us reason to think agents are unable to problem solve while dreaming. This is evidence of their being in a severely altered state.

There are some additional notes I wish to make here: Clark's research does not show that dreams can *never* plan or that dreamers are *never* themselves. Instead, it shows that the person is dreaming is severely altered from their waking state. Later in the chapter, I discuss the conditions for moral responsibility. It is not the case that the ability to solve problems is part of those conditions. The purpose of the foregone discussion was to explain, emphatically, how different a condition dreamers are in.

¹⁵⁹ Thomas Waln-Morgan (1900, digitised 2008)

¹⁶⁰ See Kekulé (1890)

Before wrapping up this section on what dreamers are like while they dream, it is worth quickly discussing the self in dreams. This can be confusing: much of what has been written on the self in dreams has been written about the nature of the experience one has of one's self in dreaming and how that experience contrasts with waking experience. For more on this discussion, see Revonsuo (2005), Metzinger (2003) & (2009), and Windt & Metzinger (2007). What I am interested in is whether we are always ourselves in dreams. The answer to this is no: as Locke notes people sometimes dream that they are themselves but at a different age. So, one can dream that was in themselves but younger or older.¹⁶¹ See:

Frank and I are younger and have a baby as we return from our trip. Frank has found a new place, but it is located in a sunken mall.¹⁶²

It is also the case that people report dreaming as a non-person. For example, see Sofia Larsson's report that she sometimes dreams of being a wolf hunting deer.¹⁶³

It is not within the scope of this chapter to discuss how being someone else in the dream might impact dream morality. But it is interesting and is mentioned as a potential area of future interest.

In this section, I have discussed what we are like when we dream. I have focused on the state dreamers are in while they dream as well as the self in dreams. In the following sections, I now tie this to moral responsibility: given the state that dreamers are in, is it possible that they ever meet the conditions for moral responsibility?

Do Dream Actions Come from Our Real-Self?

In this section, I discuss a version of the "real self" view. This section outlines Susan Wolf's view of moral responsibility. I take this view as given for the purposes of the paper. After explaining Wolf's view, I show that agents could be responsible for their dream actions given this account. I understand this as laying the bedrock required for moral responsibility.¹⁶⁴ After this, I discuss additional conditions required for moral responsibility. Wolf's view can be explained as:

¹⁶¹ This is mentioned by Locke in *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1689).

¹⁶² Emma, #1978-031, recorded 1978-05-31.

¹⁶³ Sofia Larsson, taken from Quora (2021)

¹⁶⁴ It is unclear, at least to me, whether Wolf is best understood as arguing for responsibility or attribution. For some, these will be the same thing. For the purposes of this chapter, I am marking Wolf's view (and she marks moral competence as an additional condition from the real self-view herself) as different from both awareness and moral competence.

an agent's behaviour is attributable to the agent's real self... if she is at liberty (or able) to govern her behaviour on the basis of her will and to govern her will on the basis of her valuation system.¹⁶⁵

Real-self views have been called different names by different people. Sometimes they are called structural, or hierarchical, or mesh theories. Wolf has given two conditions: (1) the agent can control her behaviour through her will and (2) her will is controlled by her valuation system. For Wolf, and for other real self-views, the idea is that an agent is **not** merely governed by their strongest desire. Instead, that motivating desire is something the agent endorses because it is governed by her values. Alternatively, it could be governed by a second-order desire. A second order desire is a desire about a desire. For example, Wolf explains that people acting because of compulsive desires are oftentimes not responsible since these desires are oftentimes not governed by a desire to have those compulsions or governed by the agent's values.

Is it the case that dreamers never have their desires appropriately lined up for moral responsibility or that their dream actions do not align with their values, given a real-self view? The answer is no. Here is an example case that seems routine:

While dreaming, I desire to cheat on my partner. I think cheating is great! I take steps to cheat on my partner: I book a sleazy motel room; I arrange to meet there; and when we do meet there I cheat on my partner.

It seems possible, and indeed actual, that my desires sufficiently aligned for moral responsibility in this case. It seems that I desire to desire to cheat. Although is it the case that my desires are effective? Someone might insist that they are *not* because, in this case, I have not actually cheated. This criticism is misplaced: the desire is effective in so far as it motivates me to act, even in the dream. The effectiveness of intention or act the desire motivates is independent of the desire's effectiveness. Instead, the desire is effective if it causes an intention or act.

A proponent of the real-self view might object by saying dreaming agents *always* lack a necessary historical component required to be responsible for their mesh of desires. Fischer and Ravizza argue the mesh [between higher and lower order desires] were produced by ...brainwashing or subliminal advertising ... we would not hold the agent morally responsible for his behaviour.¹⁶⁶

Mele gives a case to illustrate: Beth and Ann come to believe the same things; have the same desires; have the same second order desires; and have the same moral personality.¹⁶⁷ Ann has acquired her desires in the normal ways. Beth, however, has had her desires manipulated by a team of neuroscientists to be

¹⁶⁵ Wolf (1990: 33)

¹⁶⁶ Fischer & Ravizza (1998), Talbert (2022)

¹⁶⁷ Mele (1995), (2006)

identical to Ann's desires. Both, upon reflection, are happy with their desires and see themselves as reflectively endorsing them. However, Ann's desires (and the actions she takes because of these desires) do not seem to be her own despite fitting Frankfurt's barebones explanation of responsibility. A response someone defending the true-self case could give is to add this condition of a historical component that the agent's desires are 'their own'. From this, one could respond that dream cases are analogous to cases like Beth's and therefore the actions one takes in their dreams are not, intuitively, their own.

I believe there are several successful responses to cases like this. Biting the bullet is a tack taken by Mckenna¹⁶⁸ who argues that we often gain desires in 'weird' ways and ways that seem beyond our control. No one has complete control over their desires, and so this does not seem a sufficient reason to reject that an agent is morally responsible. This is likely unsuccessful because even if no one is in complete control of their desires, some do seem to be in far more control: one can grant that the 'normal ways' that Beth gains her desires are often out of her control without granting that Ann's case still looks problematic. The second response, which looks more successful, is that what makes Ann's case so intuitively problematic is that her desires are brought about by someone else; externally and without any internal processing done by Ann. This is not what is happening in dreams; even if dreams *are like psychosis*, they are not brought about by someone else. The final solution is to accept that there are cases where an agent has an improper psychological history, and this would mean that they are not responsible for those actions that come about as product of that history. In the context of this paper, one would have to posit that all desires formed in the dream are formed in a way that excludes an agent from moral evaluation. This looks dubious. However, even if it is granted one could point *only* to the desires that one does not form in the dream. Here are two cases:

1. While dreaming, Susan forms the desire to desire that she cheat on her partner. She also forms the desire to cheat on her partner. This leads to her attempting to cheat on her partner in the dream.
2. While awake, Susan has the desire to cheat on her partner. She also has the desire to desire to cheat on her partner. While dreaming, she has the desire to cheat on her partner and the desire to desire that she cheat on her partner. This leads to her attempting to cheat on her partner.

Even if it one wishes to exclude the first case the second case has the appropriate mesh and the appropriate history as well as an immoral action. This establishes the groundwork required for moral evaluation of the dreamer. I now discuss the extra conditions often thought to be required for moral responsibility.

Are Dreamers Aware?

¹⁶⁸ Mckenna (2004)

In this section, I explain and engage with what Cowan has recently said about awareness in dreaming. I discuss, as he does, culpable ignorance. I agree with much of what Cowan says here and use what he says to build upon the thesis that agents are often morally competent while dreaming.

While nearly everyone agrees that awareness is required for responsibility, the particular type (or definition) of awareness required is up for debate. Cowan gives two accounts of awareness: strong and weak. Under weak, an agent must believe either occurrently or have that belief readily available that: (i) the action the agent performs is of a relevant type; (ii) the action has a particular moral status; (iii) the action will likely have certain consequences; and (iv) there are other options available.¹⁶⁹ Under strong, these seem conditions exist but the agent must *know* rather than merely believe.¹⁷⁰

Cowan then explains that given weak, dreamers may be morally responsible. He discusses cheating dreams and writes that so long as they have the relevant moral beliefs – “that they are cheating, that it is wrong, that it will likely upset relevant people”¹⁷¹ – and that they believe they could not cheat then dream morality is possible. If strong is true, then dreamers will meet these conditions far less often: dreamers seem to form systematically false beliefs while dreaming. Here, it is not the case the dreamer is *actually* cheating and so the belief “I am cheating” is false.¹⁷² However, it might be sufficient for dreamers to know *that they are trying to cheating* rather than falsely believe that they are cheating. Cowan remarks that “cases in which this constitutes knowledge and is accompanied by occurrent knowledge of the moral status of such a trying, and likely consequences, may be very rare indeed.”¹⁷³ It is hard to gauge how rare instances of this would be. See the following report:

How could I get my property insurance reinstated if I file a report, or how could I get my insurance back and then make the claim and still have everything covered by insurance. I started thinking about the morality of that and thought that wasn't right for me to do that. I'll just have to suffer the loss.¹⁷⁴

Here, Barb Sanders *seems* to understand the wrong making features of the action which seem to include its likely consequences. It is unclear how rare dreams like this are. I believe similar dreams, where the required beliefs for awareness are not occurrent, are more common. For a weaker version of awareness, all that is required is that the relevant beliefs are quickly and easily brought to mind if reflected upon. These seem, to me, more common although it is still difficult to engage. Take, for instance, the following:

I am having an exam in my culture and diversity class. There is a lot of material to remember. I had a dream that I was sitting in class taking the exam and I could not remember anything that I studied. The clock kept ticking away and I could not write anything. I started to cheat off the girl

¹⁶⁹ Cowan (2023: 25)

¹⁷⁰ Cowan (2023: 26)

¹⁷¹ Cowan (2023: 26)

¹⁷² Cowan (2023: 27)

¹⁷³ Cowan (2023: 27)

¹⁷⁴ Elizabeth, #0019. Recorded 1995-11-03.

in front of me. I wrote all her answers down. The professor was getting suspicious. I started to sweat a lot; sweat was dripping down my forehead.¹⁷⁵

While it is unclear that the person in this dream occurrently knows why cheating on a test is wrong, it seems plausible that they could, even in the dream, bring those beliefs to mind if they reflected upon them. It is hard to tell: dream reports are not rich enough and it is possible that agents are simply unable to tell if they could access those beliefs. Still, Cowan believes that dreamers, at least some of the time, meet the awareness condition. I wish to give this additional support. While there are many ways in which one might be required to be morally aware. In the upcoming section, I discuss moral competence. I understand moral competence as an additional condition required for moral responsibility.

Are Dreamers Ever Morally Competent?

In this section, I argue that agents are (at least some of the time) morally competent. I define and explain moral competence. I repeat Watson's real-life example of a man called Robert Harris. Wolf remarks that in addition to an action needing to come from your real-self, an agent must also be morally competent.¹⁷⁶ An agent is morally competent if they have "the ability to recognize and respond to moral considerations."¹⁷⁷ Moral competence can be impaired through a number of avenues. Wolf primarily discusses upbringing and environment. Plausibly, though, illnesses such as addiction may lead to moral incompetence. The notion that impaired moral competence undermines moral responsibility is commonplace.¹⁷⁸ A primary motivation for this belief is that it seems unfair to judge someone who is morally incompetent. Let's take Neil Levy's account as an example. Levy concludes:

we can reasonably blame agents only for those things they could omit to do by way of some reasoning procedure... Reasoning is sensitive to the true and good only insofar as we actually recognize them.¹⁷⁹

The crux here is that those who do not, or cannot, recognize the good cannot be expected to be sensitive to the good. It would be akin to holding someone responsible for failing a test that they never had the ability to learn about. It is simply *unfair*.¹⁸⁰

Watson discusses real-life murderer Robert Alton Harris who he argues is someone who was not morally competent. Harris was sentenced to death for murdering two 16-year-old boys after stealing their car to use in a bank robbery. However, Robert Harris's early life was appalling. Both his parents were alcoholics; his dad regularly beat him; Robert himself might have had fetal alcohol syndrome; his father

¹⁷⁵ Taken from a dream report bank collected from men at college between 1997 and 1998. Dreambank code #093-3.

¹⁷⁶ These views are not necessarily in competition. Some might see the real-self view as sufficient for moral responsibility.

¹⁷⁷ Talbert (2022)

¹⁷⁸ See Benson (2001), Doris & Murphy (2007), Fischer & Ravizza (1998), Fricker (2010), Levy (2003), Russell (1995), Wallace (1996), Watson (1987). All cited in Talbert (2022).

¹⁷⁹ Levy (2007: 739)

¹⁸⁰ It is interesting to note this intuitive sense of unfairness is what motivates so many to reject moral luck. For more on this, see chapter 2 of this thesis.

was arrested for molesting his sisters; Robert spent time in juvenile detention where he was repeatedly sexually abused; and he was legally abandoned by his parents while he was still in juvenile detention. The man's life is a litany of misery. Watson posits that because of the life he lived (perhaps by virtue of his "evil manner"), Robert Harris is simply not a member of the moral community and does not have the same access to moral knowledge that we do. Robert Harris fails to be a full moral agent because he simply did not have access to moral knowledge or could be reasonably expected to find and use the tools that lead to moral knowledge.

Even if it is the case that Harris has no moral responsibility, I argue that dreamers are, often times, importantly different. I now argue that dreamers *sometimes* have moral knowledge and *sometimes* engage with that moral knowledge. In fact, I argue that dreamers likely have moral knowledge often while dreaming and that dream reports show some evidence that dreamers are sensitive to moral reasons. I begin by talking about moral knowledge.

I now run through some examples. The first example I want to run through is the one taken from a Catholic forum on the internet:

Well last night I had another wet dream, but this one was different from others ... I began to watch pornography and masturbate. **In the dream, I knew it was wrong, thought about it, and consented to continue masturbating until I ejaculated.** At that moment, in the dream, I felt the Holy Spirit leave me. In the dream, I immediately felt horrible and started to pray for forgiveness, and that's when I woke up.¹⁸¹

I have put emphasis on the essential part here: while dreaming, it seems as though they report playing the game. I have previously talked about two cheating dreams from Barb Sanders¹⁸²:

Cary Grant and I are having a wonderful affair. He and I have a secret apartment we meet at. I am falling in love with another man. I take him to the apartment to have him meet Cary. Cary is in the apt. looking cute and silly like he does in his comedy movies. He opens the door and says, "Why are the three of you just standing there in a line." Some woman is with us. He says that will give away where our secret apartment is. He is a little upset.¹⁸³

and

I'm at an office. Marv C and I are very attracted to each other, sexually. **He moves toward me, trying to get me to kiss him. I want to, but he's married and so I choose not to get involved with him.** He keeps following me and cuddling up. I'd be tempted but then I'd see his wife or

¹⁸¹ Johntherevelator, 2011.

¹⁸² Barb Sanders had her dream reports collected and analysed over the course of her life.

¹⁸³ Barb Sanders #4118. Recorded 2001-06-13.

think she's there. He kisses me sweetly with great sexual need and I feel a powerful surge of desire and **I can't fight it anymore, so I respond and we make love.** It's wonderful.¹⁸⁴

In the first example, Barb Sanders reports having an affair with Cary Grant in the dream. She reports is as an affair and that it takes place in a secret apartment. This, at least, suggests moral knowledge with the content that 'affairs are wrong.' In the second example, Barb again reports knowing that it would be morally dubious to 'get involved' with a married man, but desires eventually take over. Again, these are not the thoughts of someone outside the moral community. To secure the point, I want to run through three more examples that show even more explicit evidence of moral knowledge. These next three reports are all from Elizabeth who was a woman who recorded her own dreams for over 20 years.

They and two other men were sitting at this huge metal table that was on tracks. I electrically sabotaged the table and it crashed when they could not stop it. They ended up being killed with two innocent people as a result of my action. I felt bad but not guilty because I believed that I had saved many more people in the process.¹⁸⁵

and

They were teasing me mostly, and I felt a bit unsure how to respond. I usually do things for Bill C without question, or without much question unless it is something I am strongly opposed to. I do not think I would do something that I felt was morally wrong, though I can't imagine him asking me to do something like that.¹⁸⁶

and

How could I get my property insurance reinstated if I file a report, or how could I get my insurance back and then make the claim and still have everything covered by insurance. I started thinking about the morality of that and thought that wasn't right for me to do that. I'll just have to suffer the loss.¹⁸⁷

In the first report, Elizabeth is engaging in moral reasoning and moral reflection. In the second example, Elizabeth reports considering whether she would or would not do something morally wrong. Lastly, Elizabeth reports making a moral decision in her dream.

All six of these examples show that these agents, even when dreaming, are engaged in the moral game. They can consider the moral impact of their actions and are able to hold moral knowledge. By itself, this seems sufficient to say that these agents are in the moral game in a way that Harris is not. In these examples, an agent seems to have occurrent moral beliefs. I believe that dreamers frequently have dispositional moral beliefs which would mean that agents have moral knowledge more often than reports might imply.

¹⁸⁴ Barb Sanders #195. Recorded 1991-11-15.

¹⁸⁵ Elizabeth #0526. Recorded 2007-07-09.

¹⁸⁶ Elizabeth #0582. Recorded 2003-02-06.

¹⁸⁷ Elizabeth, #0019. Recorded 1995-11-03.

Sosa argues that dreamers retain many of their waking beliefs after they fall asleep.¹⁸⁸

Presumably, some of these will be moral beliefs. Sosa writes:

Lying in bed until the morning is what one intended through most of the day, even as one thought about other things, as one had dinner, etc. That was still one's intention as one lay down, and there is no reason to suppose that it was lost as one fell asleep. One does not lose one's intentions.¹⁸⁹¹⁹⁰

Sosa is positing that dreamers have dispositional beliefs that carry in from waking life. Schwitzgebel explains dispositional beliefs as “a subject dispositionally believes *p* if a representation with the content *p* is stored in her memory or “belief box””¹⁹¹ Waking agents have many dispositional beliefs all the time - beliefs that are not consciously affirmed such as what you might be doing for dinner or who your favourite philosopher is. Sosa says that in order to bring this dispositional belief out of dispositionality an agent must “judge or assent or avow {the belief}, at least to oneself.”¹⁹² When that happens, the belief becomes occurrent. As Schwitzgebel continues: “when that representation is retrieved from memory for active deployment in reasoning or planning, the subject occurrently believes *p*.”¹⁹³ ¹⁹⁴

I quickly justify Sosa's position. It is parsimonious. The parsimonious defense is simple: we hold dispositional beliefs all the time while awake; while daydreaming; while hallucinating; while imagining; and even while drunk or psychotic. This includes, at least some of the time, our moral beliefs. We would need a reason to think that dreaming was a special state in order to think that dreams are not the kind of state a person can be in while holding dispositional attitudes. Such a reason does not exist.¹⁹⁵

It is, then, the case that dreamers have moral knowledge in some dreams. We have seen through dream reports that they have moral knowledge. It is also likely the case that dreamers have dispositional moral beliefs while dreaming. The case for reason responsiveness is harder to make. Fischer and Ravizza offer a permissive account of sensitivity. Fischer and Ravizza's account is that an agent is reason-responsive if their mechanism (understood as the process that leads to action) *could have* responded to reasons. Put differently, an agent's decision-making process could have responded differently to considerations to performing a separate, or no, action other than the one performed. In addition, Fischer and Ravizza say that an agent must be receptive to a range of moral considerations (again this can be

¹⁸⁸ This has been covered in another chapter but bears fruit here too.

¹⁸⁹ Sosa (2005: 8-9)

¹⁹⁰ For the sake of clarity, I do not believe Sosa thinks we retain *all* our intentions. Just that we retain many intentions.

¹⁹¹ Schwitzgebel (2019)

¹⁹² Sosa (2005: 8)

¹⁹³ Schwitzgebel (2019)

¹⁹⁴ In previous chapters, I have discussed that Sosa explicitly thinks this is true for beliefs and intentions.

¹⁹⁵ There is a tangential worry that bolsters my argument. If one were to defend the claim that dreamers do not hold typical dispositional attitudes, this would popular arguments often given in favour of specific ontologies of dreaming. For example, if agents while imagining while awake have dispositional beliefs but agents while imagining while dreaming do not then this seems to give us reason to think they are not imagining!

understood counterfactually). Cowan quotes Augustine as evidence that, at least at face value, there exists an account of a dreamer being reason-responsive:

During sleep where is my reason which, when I am awake, resists such suggestions and remains firm and undismayed even in face of the realities themselves? Is it sealed off when I close my eyes? Does it fall asleep with the senses of the body? *And why is it that even in sleep I often resist the attractions of these images*, for I remember my chaste resolutions and abide by them and give no consent to temptations of this sort?¹⁹⁶

Here, Augustine admits that he sometimes resists temptation in the dream and sometimes does not. This looks to be evidence that he could have responded differently; he could have *not* been tempted. His resisting also shows a sensitivity to moral reasoning: he says that he recalls his chaste resolutions.

There are objections to this, which I now run through briefly. The first objection is to ask if this dream report is accurate in so much as Augustine confesses to remembering his chaste resolutions. But it is hard to tell if this is an earnest account: this *would be* moral reasoning had it *actually* occurred, but it could simply be that Augustine resists temptation in some dreams and he assumes, after that fact, he resisted because of moral considerations. The second objection is that since the dreaming agent is in such a state that we have reason to doubt that their reason-responsiveness mechanism is warped sufficiently enough that “someone might doubt that someone in this condition could act from motives they stand behind, or from reasons-responsive mechanisms, or have the capacity to do otherwise.”¹⁹⁷ This requires ignoring dream reports and as already mentioned in the thesis this is likely untenable. The second object is dealt with by Cowan by appealing to specific cases. To be clear: Cowan is not arguing that Augustine is in the right but that there are other cases where dreamers look to be, more obviously, reason responsive.

Cowan highlights a group of cases where a dreaming agent is competent. Cowan explains that in cases of false awakenings dreamers seemingly wake up in their normal surroundings, form the belief that they have woken up and begin their day as they normally would. Importantly, they seem to have the same attitudes as they would have had if they were awake. Cowan cites Windt and Metzinger (2007), Buzzi (2019), and Rosen (2012) to argue that false awakened dreamers are capable of rational thought, of metacognition, and of self-control “similar to that found in waking life.”¹⁹⁸ These cases seem to meet the conditions for competency far easier. The second candidate cases are re-entry into the dream.

In sum, dreamers likely have moral knowledge fairly often in dreams. We have seen examples where that knowledge is occurrent but I have argued that it is likely the case that dreamers have

¹⁹⁶ Augustine, Confessions. Cited by Matthews (1981) and Cowan (2023).

¹⁹⁷ Cowan (2023: 13)

¹⁹⁸ Cowan (2023: 17)

dispositional moral knowledge as well. However, given the state that dreamers are in, it looks as though moral competency is rarer. While it is unclear that competency is present in ‘normal’ dreams, Cowan highlights a case where agents seem ‘more’ competent than they are in ‘normal’ dreams.

In the following section, I explain another set of cases of culpable incompetence. I give my own account of this and conclude by discussing what Cowan thinks is the best candidate for a case of culpable incompetence while dreaming.

Can You Preserve the No Special Condition Thesis Even if Dreamers Are Incompetent?

I now discuss the possibility that someone can be culpably incompetent in the dream. This would mean that even though the agent is not competent, they would still be responsible for what they do. I argue that dreamers do sometimes choose to dream, and perhaps even choose dream content. I argue, alongside Cowan, and these cases seem like instances where an agent is culpably ignorant because they make the choice to dream while competent. However, I believe the case that Cowan highlights is not par with the cases that we are interested in. So, I re-introduce Augustine’s case from the start and explain key features of it. I then offer two accounts where an agent seems morally responsible for what they do in their dream because they could have prevented it: (1) a magic pill account and (2) an attempted prevention account. I believe this second account makes dream morality more common and is able to capture the cases we are more interested in.

Let’s begin with an account of culpable incompetence. Cowan cites Fischer and Ravizza’s tracing account. Under a tracing account, a case of culpable incompetence is one where an incompetent action is “suitably related” to an earlier competent one. Tracing accounts are popular. Paradigm cases of culpable incompetence often revolve around drunken activities: some agent, while so drunk that they are incompetent, performs some morally reprehensible action such as drunk driving. Since their choice to get drunk was made while competent, their incompetence is not exculpatory. There are two questions to extract from this case and apply to dreaming: (1) is it ever the case that dreamers choose to dream in a similar way to how agents choose to get drunk and (2) is it ever the case that dreamers choose specific dream actions in a similar way to how agents might choose to get into the car?

The first question to ask is “do dreamers ever choose to dream?” This is an empirical question. I take the answer to be obvious: yes! Anecdotally, I know this to be true because I have chosen to dream, and my sister has chosen to dream. We have both, on occasion, picked desserts with the intention that these desserts would impact our ability to dream as well as the vividness of the dream. Beyond the anecdote, it seems near certain that some people go to bed with the express intention to dream. For instance, people who keep dream journals seem to want to dream, rather than have dreamless sleep, most

of the time. Similarly, it seems plausible that someone could have a nap with the express intention to dream. These cases are moderately niche, but still do enough to satisfy the no special condition thesis which requires that dreamers, only sometimes, are not immune to moral evaluation. There are two objections that I predict: (1) that agents cannot *really* choose to dream and (2) even if dreamers could choose to dream, they are not choosing specific content.

Cowan explains an account of intentionality that would purportedly exclude the ability for an agent to choose to dream. Cowan explains that some believe that in order for an agent to perform an intentional action they must know how to perform that action.¹⁹⁹ ²⁰⁰Knowing how to do something, Cowan writes, “plausibility requires success and perhaps also counterfactual robustness.”²⁰¹ Under such an account, someone can intentionally play the lottery, but they cannot intentionally win the lottery. Intention seems to require knowing how to do something: it is not the case that I know how to win the lottery. It is only the case that I know how to play the lottery. So, again given this account, that while someone can choose to go to sleep, they cannot *really* choose to dream.

Cowan tests the claim that agents, even given this account, do seem to be able to intentionally dream. Cowan writes that dreamers know how to sleep and sleep reliably (and in a robustly counterfactual way) and that sleep reliably and successfully leads to dreaming. Cowan posits this is tantamount to saying that smokers know how to get lung cancer since lung cancer is a reliable consequence of smoking. This looks insufficient for saying that because dreamers know how to sleep that they know how to dream. Still, we can appeal to cases like the ones mentioned on the previous page: cases where dreamers eat or drink certain things in order to sleep. And so even on this specific account of intentionality, there are cases where dreamers choose to dream. So, it seems to be the case that dreamers, at least some of the time, can choose to dream.

The second question is “do dreamers ever choose specific dream content?” I respond that (1) dreamers sometimes do pick specific dream content and (2) even if dreamers do not pick specific content it is possible they chose to dream where that content is reasonably expected. For (1), Cowan brings to light cases where dreamer’s re-enter dreams after waking up with the express intention of continuing that specific dream.²⁰² For example, I have been awoken by an alarm clock, decided that now was not the time to be awake, and willfully re-joined the dream that my alarm clock brought me out of.²⁰³ These cases, though, are rare. More interestingly, and plausibly more in line with the example cases brought up (like Augustine’s and the many from Barb Sanders), dreamers could be morally evaluable for dream content so long as they have reason to expect it.

¹⁹⁹ Cowan (2023: 20). Cowan cites Silwa (2017).

²⁰⁰ There are other accounts of intentional action.

²⁰¹ Cowan (2023: 20). Cowan cites Hawley (2003) with reference to counterfactual robustness.

²⁰² Cowan (2023: 22)

²⁰³ Since my focus has been on non-lucid dreams, this does not matter for my paper. However, Cowan highlights that lucid dreamers *often* choose dream content.

Let's pause to take stock: so far I have offered, in step with Cowan, that there are a few cases where dreamers are plausibly morally competent or, if not competent, then culpably incompetent. The two highlighted candidates I have discussed are false awakenings and dream re-entry.²⁰⁴ When we think of paradigm cases of dream morality these are not the cases we are thinking of: Saint Augustine is not re-entering the dream and he expressly resists the idea that he would act the way he does in his dreams in waking life. In the multitude of cheating dreams, I have discussed, it seems as though dreamers are not re-entering dreams nor do they seem to think they ever would cheat. While I think Cowan is correct that the cases that he explains are likely candidates for dream morality, I believe his scope too strict and the cases he discusses are far away from the cases of interest that people often think about when they think about dream morality. In this final section, I offer two sorts of cases where a dreamer looks morally responsible for 'normal' dreams.

Three Sorts of Cases and Ways to Prevent Culpable Incompetence While Dreaming

In this section, I talk about three sorts of cases. I talk about anxiety cases, Augustinian cases and routine sleep cases. For each case, I argue that that the wrongdoing agents do is predictable and preventable. However, what is required to prevent the wrongdoing might look too demanding in some cases. To begin with, I give an example centered on a magic pill that prevents dreaming altogether. The main purpose of the magic pill case is to pump the intuition that, if there were no cost to it, dreamers should attempt to prevent immoral dream actions from happening. Then, with the three sets of real-life cases, I go on to argue that dream morality is more common than Cowan seems to think it is. This addresses my criticism and refocuses the discussion on dream morality on cases that we are, plausibly, more interested in. While the magic pill case is intended as a hypothetical case, one might think that it is too inconceivable.

Here is a case where I think an agent does something wrong in a dream, but it is not an instance of a false awakening nor a case where an agent re-enters the dream. I believe this case is evidence of dream morality given that the agent is morally competent; sufficiently aware of their actions; and their actions align with their real selves. Let us say that someone has chronic dreams where they molest children. They also take pleasure in these dreams. For the sake of argument, let us say that these actions, desires, and so on align with who they are in waking life. They are not morally incompetent while dreaming and they are

²⁰⁴ Cowan discusses a third set of cases where dreamers act in a way they would in waking life. This is because those dreamers can only be said to be acting *in* ignorance rather than *from* ignorance.

aware of *what* they are doing. If the orthodox view of dreaming is true, then this person is acting wrongly. If the imagination view is true, this person is having morally evaluable fantasies. Let us also say that they have these dreams most nights. They go to a doctor and explain that they are having these horrible dreams. The doctor prescribes a magic pill made up of ketamine, diazepam, and fentanyl²⁰⁵ and promises that these will decrease the number of dreams you have. If this does not work, the doctor assures the person that there are a number of drugs that have been alter to dream content: clorazepate dipotassium, oxazepam, midazolam, triazolam and nitrazepam have all had studies that show that they effect what one does in the dream/the dream narrative.²⁰⁶ The doctor promises, and let's assume the doctor is right, that there will be no side effects to these drugs. It seems obvious to me that this person *should* take them! It seems obvious that the person should take them because they could reasonably expect to form horrible beliefs; intentions; desires and have been given a magic pill that would prevent that. So, even if someone maintained that dream actions, or the dreams themselves, were not willed and we are incompetent during them, it seems intuitive to say that so long as they could be prevented dreamers might still be culpable. In so far as one can prevent something from happening, then they seem to be relevantly responsible. There are, of course, other conditions – some of which we've discussed already such as a proper alignment between someone's second order attitudes and their actions – for responsibility.²⁰⁷

I can see a few objections to the magic pill case. The first objection I predict is that it seems implausible to think that we have any moral responsibility towards taking a rich cocktail of drugs even if it were to prevent me from doing something. The amount required to impact dreaming is also fairly high. For instance, Grace's study used the dose of 1 milligram of ketamine per 1 kilogram of the patient's bodyweight.²⁰⁸ Although this amount is not dangerous and is significantly less than a recreational user would take and by a margin.²⁰⁹ So, someone looking to bite the bullet could say that the amounts being taken are not significant enough to cause damage or form habits or even get you high. They are, however, enough to stop you dreaming. I am also content to hand-wave this away: presumably as our understanding of dreaming gets better and our understanding of medicine gets better, such a pill with no side effects will come about. The second objection is that the magic pill case is *at least* as rare as Cowan's cases. I targeted Cowan's case for not being applicable to the cases we are interested in. This criticism has bite. So, are there cases similar to the magic pill case but more common? I argue so: I argue that many dreams are *predictable* and *preventable* without the need for a magic pill.

²⁰⁵ All three have some evidence to show that taking them reduces how often you dream. See Grace (2003).

²⁰⁶ See Allen (1983), Ellingsen (1983), and Fischbach (1983).

²⁰⁷ This case is easily tweaked to reflect the imagination theory instead. Instead of forming bad beliefs, the agent could be having fantasies that are morally problematic.

²⁰⁸ Anything over 60 milligrams is considered a very high dose.

²⁰⁹ Anecdotally, drug users might use 5mg per kg. This is 5x the dose used that hindered dreaming.

The first set of real-life cases I wish to discuss are what I have called anxiety cases. Here is the first example:

Frank sometimes has dreams where he cheats on his partner. In the dream, he always cheats on his current partner with his ex-girlfriend. Frank knows that he is cheating in the dream and Frank knows that what he is doing is morally dubious. In fact, in the dream Frank often frets about getting caught.²¹⁰

We can say that, at least in the dream, Frank's actions come from his real-self. Now, an additional caveat: Frank knows that he is far more likely to have these cheating dreams whenever he experiences a bout of anxiety in waking life. The anxiety and what Frank does in the dream are causally connected in this way.

There are cases similar to Frank's case. One example of such cases would be PTSD nightmares. It is often the case that dreamers, while experiencing a PTSD nightmare, do things that they would be morally responsible for if they were not culpably ignorant. Frank, and plausibly many other people, could avoid the wrongdoing they do while ignorant. For Frank, taking steps to limit his anxiety would be appropriate. There are a variety of ways that one might do this. For instance, if Frank found that exercised helped with anxiety then Frank would be culpable for what he did in his dream if he recognized he was anxious, knew that this anxiety would lead to wrongdoing while dreaming, and chose to take no steps towards mitigating that anxiety. It is essential to note that Frank does not need to be successful in avoiding dream morality. Instead, he just needs to take reasonable steps towards preventing to avoid responsibility even if those steps fail.

It does not seem too demanding to say that Frank has these obligations. Agents in similar cases intuitively have obligations to control their emotions or circumstances. If Frank knew that anxiety would effect his waking relationships, for instance if being anxious made Frank act less intimately with his partner, then Frank likely has obligations to address his anxiety in some way. This is doubly the case if Frank's anxiety renders him incompetent in the moment.

In sum, Frank's dreams seem predictable, and Frank can take steps to prevent them. In other cases, some action being predictable and preventable (regardless of the state of the agent at the time where they perform the act) is sufficient for moral responsibility.

The second set of cases I wish to discuss at Augustinian cases. In cases like Frank's, some waking emotion effects the likelihood of immoral dream actions. In Augustinian cases, the state one is in while dreaming leads to them performing actions they are motivated towards while awake but manage to resist. As a reminder, here is Augustine:

²¹⁰ A colleague of mine gave me a similar case. He, when anxious, has a dream like the plot of "The Tell-Tale Heart". He finds himself murdering someone, hiding their body, and lying to the police to evade punishment.

During sleep where is my reason which, when I am awake, resists such suggestions and remains firm and undismayed even in face of the realities themselves?

and

But there still exist in my memory—of which I have spoken much—the images of such things as my habits had fixed there; and these rush into my thoughts, though strengthless, when I am awake; but in sleep they do so not only so as to give pleasure, but even to obtain consent, and what very nearly resembles reality.

In the first quote from Augustine, he implies he has these temptations while awake. In the second, he takes himself as doing something wrong by enjoying his ‘memories’. He is able to resist the temptations and enjoyment while awake, but not while asleep. They seem frequent enough to be labelled predictable, even if there is the same sort of causal relationship as there is with Frank’s dreams and Frank’s anxiety. What is to be said of such cases? The solution offered to Frank-styled cases seems unsuccessful since ‘addressing temptation’ or ‘forgetting memories’ seems either too demanding or impossible. In fact, Augustine seems to be taking steps to do these already and it just so happens that he fails while dreaming. So, I propose that Augustine should respond to this by either trying to control dream content or trying to not dream at all.

The first response that Augustine could have to his problematic dream content is to try to learn to lucid dream.²¹¹ Crowther remarks, and this is supported by some empirical evidence that he cites, that a dreamer that is lucid dreaming is closer to wakefulness than they are to non-lucid dreaming in terms of their ability to act as well as how aware and competent they are.²¹² If this were the case, then Augustine could avoid acting immorally by lucid dreaming because he would be in a state where he is far more likely to resist temptation. There is evidence that lucid dreaming is a learnable skill. For instance, see La Berge’s “Lucid Dreaming as a Learnable Skill: A Case Study”. While the conclusions were tentative, La Berge’s results were:

Without using any induction procedure, the subject reported less than 1 lucid dream per month.

Using auto-suggestion resulted in a range of 1 to 13 lucid dreams per month with at most 2 per night. MILD yielded 18 to 26 lucid dreams per month, with up to 4 a night.^{213 214}

The second response, similar to the lucid dreaming response, is to say that Augustine should attempt dreamless sleep. There has been much recent work on dreamless sleep.²¹⁵ There is some tentative to think that one can learn to dreamless sleep similar to how one can learn to meditate. Specifically, some

²¹¹ Cowan (2023) highlights the possibility of agent’s having an obligation to attempt to ‘short circuit’ dreams they are having where they are about to, or are doing, something wrong. I am saying something similar here.

²¹² See Crowther (2018) for more.

²¹³ La Berge (1980: 1023)

²¹⁴ The two methodologies do not matter. Neither are intuitively overly demanding and neither require outside help. Other methods include external stimulation such as drugs or setting up flashing lights that alerted you, while asleep, to the fact you are dreaming.

²¹⁵ See Windt (2015) for a nice summary.

Buddhists treat it as a skill similar to meditation.²¹⁶ This looks far more demanding than lucid dreaming, and there are reasons to doubt that dreamless sleep is even possible and there are no such concerns for lucid dreaming.

Briefly, then, if Augustine cannot address the cause of his immoral dream actions, he might be able to take steps to stop himself being in that condition. His dreams seem predictable, or at least recurring enough for him to be worried about them, and preventable in that lucid dreaming could lead to him resisting negative actions or not taking pleasure from immoral memories.

The final set of cases are cases I have called general dream cases. When looking at folk accounts on Reddit or Quora, it is commonly true that the dreams these people are worried about are not similar to the Frank or Augustinian cases: they do not seem predictable, and their underlying cause seems to evade the dreamer. These dreams are reported as one-offs. Here is an example:

It keeps happening. Not night after night, but every few months. And it isn't "I had a dream where I had sex with someone, but it wasn't my boyfriend." It's, "I had a dream where I was still dating my boyfriend, and I intentionally had sex with someone else." Sometimes it's a guy I know (and am attracted to).²¹⁷

These dreams do *not* seem predictable, and I am happy to concede that dreamers should learn to lucid dream for the rare occasions where they might do wrong in their dreams is an implausible claim. However, I wish to tentatively offer some possible solutions that might still decrease the likelihood of such dreams. There are general ways to avoid 'tumultuous' dreams by having better sleep habits: meditation; healthy sleep hygiene; a good diet; exercise; and a decrease in anxiety can all lead to more tranquil dreams where agents plausibly are less likely to do wrong.²¹⁸ The empirical work on this is too sparse, but if we assume that there is a way in which we can reduce the likelihood of immoral dream content in non-invasive ways (and perhaps these should be things we have alternative reasons to do as well) then we ought to do it.

Even if it were the case that agents are never culpably incompetent in general dream cases, I have still offered two new sets of cases where dreamers are culpably ignorant. Specifically, I hope to have captured cases people are often worried about and have been able to defend my paper from the objection that I levied against Cowan: that the best candidates for dream morality make dream morality exceedingly rare if dreamers are always incompetent.²¹⁹ Under my account, dream morality is still rare but it is more common.

²¹⁶ See Prasad (2000) for more on this.

²¹⁷ Onlyinmydreams1, taken from Reddit (2015).

²¹⁸ The empirical work on this often small studies and borderline anecdotal.

²¹⁹ Both Cowan and I have granted that dreamers are always incompetent for the sake of this line of argumentation.

Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the no special condition thesis. I have discussed the state that dreamers find themselves in which was followed by a discussion on moral responsibility. I have argued that dreamers are, at least sometimes, their real selves. I have argued that it is unclear that dreamers are ever morally competent even though there are clear examples of them engaging in moral knowledge. For the sake of argument, I granted that dreamers are systematically morally incompetent. Even if this were true, I argued that dreamers might be culpably incompetent because of the steps they could take outside the dream to prevent what they do in the dream. I focused on predictability and preventability as conditions for culpable incompetence. I have argued that dream morality is, while not common, not rare. In the last section where I discuss three sets of cases, I have tried to head off the objection that avoiding dream immorality looks to be too demanding.

In the next chapter, I take the thesis – the no special condition thesis – that has been discussed extensively in this chapter and throw it together with other theses to make the standard argument. What follows is a critical discussion of that standard argument.

I believe, now, we have a positive case for thinking dreamers might be sometimes responsible for what they do. However, it is worth remarking back upon that initial implausibility claim: dream morality now looks plausible. But does it look plausible for the sort of cases brought up as examples? I have tried to support that it does, and I have tried to respond that this is something that Cowan's account fails to capture. My hope, again, is that this initial *reductio* mentioned in the introduction is being put under pressure throughout the thesis.

Chapter 6 Response to Cowan and Driver: Moral Luck and Bullet Biting

This chapter is a response to Driver's "Dream Morality" and Cowan's "Dreams, Morality and the Waking World." Driver defends the standard argument and uses it to argue against evaluational internalism. She believes that evaluational internalists are forced to conclude that dream morality actually occurs. Since she believes that dream morality is implausible, Driver thinks it is a problem for internalists that internalism leads to it. Cowan rebuts that Driver's evaluational externalism is likely also committed to a modified version of the standard argument, and therefore Driver would be forced to adopt the dream morality thesis as well. In this chapter, I argue that Cowan is correct that Driver's SAD externalism leads to dream morality, but he is incorrect in thinking non-systematic externalism leads to dream morality. However, I do not think this gives the non-systematic externalist dialectical edge since they are committed to a more serious problem: the problem of moral luck. I conclude that if we are going to be externalists, it is better to be the sort of externalist that is committed to dream morality rather than the sort of internalist that is committed to dream morality.

First, I give the standard argument. I then outline SAD externalism. I explain the view, and then explain moral luck. I establish moral luck as a serious problem and one that SAD externalism can avoid. I then explain the standard argument before agreeing with Cowan that SAD externalism does lead to dream morality. I problematize some of the support Cowan gives and bolster it where I can. By Driver's own argument, it seems as though this conclusion should harm her SAD externalism. I argue against Cowan by saying the other externalist option, non-systematic externalism, can avoid dream morality but is forced into allowing for cases of moral luck. Avoiding moral luck is, I argue, far more rhetorically powerful than avoiding dream morality. I am defending SAD externalism and argue that Driver ought to do the same. I end by considering some objections.

Before discussing evaluational internalism or the standard argument, it is important to understand the difference between "while dreaming" and "in the dream. Here is example dream:

I'm moving to Dover. I feel sad about leaving my house. I can't figure out why I have done it. I'm moving into an apartment that is next to Rosemary's. Our windows face each other. I want to be next to Rosemary but it's only a one bedroom, a small apartment. I have to leave my pool table and other things at me house in E City. Rosemary and I go for a walk. We're near downtown Dover. We're walking on the freeway across the river. I ask if there are any grocery stores near the apt. She shows me a bookstore. I enjoy the bookstore.²²⁰

²²⁰ Barb Sanders #0320. Recorded 1981-02-027.

This is from “Barb Sanders”.²²¹ It is true that *in the dream* she does many things: she believes she is moving and is sad to be leaving; she must leave things at her house and eventually walks on the freeway. Conversely, *while dreaming* she is asleep in her bed. She is not walking on the freeway across the river, or currently in the process of moving house. As we have seen, there are some theories where the distinction, partly, collapses: under the orthodoxy it is true that she believes that she is moving to Dover, and she really is sad about it. This collapse does not happen for all ontologies of dreaming.

In this chapter, I am assuming that the orthodox view of dreaming is true. Cowan explains the dream orthodox view as:

non-lucid dreams are constituted by sensory experiences, beliefs, emotions, intentions, etc. that are of the same psychological type as those formed in waking life.²²²

I discuss the orthodoxy in more detail later, but it is essential to flag up now. It is important to know that the orthodoxy is being assumed to make sense of dream actions. Another term worth explaining is ‘dream action’. Driver explains a dream action as consisting “in willings to act and a belief that one is in fact acting in a certain way.”²²³ ²²⁴ Importantly here, a dream action does not require that you are *actually* acting in a certain way. When Driver explains dream actions, she reports that they are not *actual* actions because they do not have *actual* consequences.²²⁵ ²²⁶

I am also restricting the scope of inquiry: while lucid dreams are interesting, and important to the thesis in other ways, I am not testing lucid dreams against the dream morality thesis. I am only interested in non-lucid dreams. I am also not interested in cases of sleepwalking where someone, while sleepwalking, does something morally right or morally wrong. I am interested, then, in the most common sort of dreaming: non-lucid dreams where you do not physically act out the dream.

With all this in mind, I want to give an example and motivate the standard argument quickly. A richer defense follows.

The Standard Argument

Let us begin with a case:

I was with a guy and a girl and we used a knife to cut the apples into sections to check them. We found the right one. The guy came over to use the knife to do something. He then walked back and said something implying that a bum had been a murderer. He still had the knife so I suspected him

²²¹ This is not her real name. Barb Sanders was a middle-aged woman who recorded over four thousand dreams over the course of her life.

²²² Cowan (2021: 4)

²²³ Driver (2007: 8)

²²⁴ While not explicitly part of Driver’s definition, it is safe to assume she also thinks you must have this pairing while dreaming.

²²⁵ Driver (2007: 8)

²²⁶ It’s unclear that this is *actually* true for either SAD externalism or naïve externalism. I talk about both in detail later.

and pointed it out. He came at me but I got a knife and stabbed him. Calvin was there and a girl who I hated and who hated me. Calvin went another way and there was a big open area with a window to the sea. I went on a balcony and looked down at the bottom floor. I could see a little bit of water lapping at the shore. The girl was annoying me so I grabbed her and slammed her against the wall and threw her to the floor. I ran before her other friends could do anything. There was a game with locked doors everywhere that were techy looking. People started coming so I grabbed a gun and hid in a cupboard. They came in and I shot and killed them all.²²⁷

This is a dream report taken from Izzy.²²⁸ She reports that, in the dream, she slammed someone against a wall and onto the floor for being ‘annoying’. Izzy goes on to shoot and kill people that are looking for her. Obviously, had Izzy been awake then her actions would have been morally repugnant. It is less obviously the case that her actions are of any moral interest since Izzy was dreaming. In fact, some would doubt that Izzy even acts as at all!

There has been little written on the possibility of dream morality. There has only been one attempt to systematize an argument for dream morality. This argument comes from Cowan. He gives the ‘standard argument’ as follows:

1. Dream Orthodoxy. Simply, that dreams “are constituted by sensory experiences, beliefs, emotions, intentions, etc. that are of the same psychological type as those formed in waking life.”²²⁹
2. Evaluational Internalism. This is the claim that what matters for moral evaluation are those features internal to a person’s agency. For instance, their intentions.
3. Internalist Dream Content: subjects sometimes form, in non-lucid dreams, psychological states or propositional attitudes for which they can be evaluated for, given Internalism.
4. No Special Condition: non-lucid dreamers are at least sometimes in a state that does not render them immune to moral evaluation.

If all four theses are true, then dream morality follows. Cowan explains dream morality as:

sometimes, perhaps only rarely, what we do in non-lucid dreams is the proper object of moral assessment as wrong, right, vicious, virtuous, blameworthy, or praiseworthy.²³⁰

Cowan discusses another thesis in his paper *Dreams, Morality, and the Waking World*: the implausibility thesis. Cowan writes out the implausibility thesis as:

Dream Morality is highly implausible²³¹.

Some key terms here have already been featured. Others will be unpacked later in this chapter. Now, as is the purpose of this chapter, is to engage with the standard argument and picture how one might respond.

²²⁷ Izzy #3958. Recorded (2012-09-14)

²²⁸ Izzy recorded over 4,300 dreams from the ages of 12 to 25.

²²⁹ Cowan (2021: 4)

²³⁰ Cowan (2021: 6)

²³¹ Cowan (2021: 7)

SAD Externalism

Robert Cowan explains Julia Driver's externalism as a type of SAD Externalism. SAD stands for systematic, actualist and direct. In this section, I give an account of Driver's externalism and explain systematist, actualism and directness.

The externalism Driver supports, which she presents in *Uneasy Virtue*, is a virtue ethicist position. As a virtue ethicist, she believes virtue evaluation is primary. She understands virtue and vice through the consequences they bring about; a character trait systematically causing the good is a virtue and a character trait systematically causing the bad is a vice. Right and wrong actions, and virtuous and non-virtuous character traits, are made right, wrong, vicious or non-vicious by the outcomes they produce.²³²

Systematists believe that an action or character trait is morally right if it systematically leads to some good and some action or character trait is morally wrong if it systematically leads to some bad. Driver cites Hume's example of someone repaying a debt to a morally scrupulous bigot.²³³ Repaying the debt is considered right *even if* giving money to a bigot seems dubious. This is because repaying one's debt systematically leads to justice and systematically leads to a good.²³⁴ Conversely, to use an example Cowan uses, punching a child is wrong because it systematically leads to a bad.

Actualists believe that moral assessment ought to be based on the effects actions have in the real world, and not those effects we that are expected or produced in some other possible world. For instance, an actualist (who is not also a systematist) would think that someone who, despite being careful and having no ill will, causes some harm has still done something wrong. He expected his carefulness would mean no one was hurt, and in near possible worlds no one is hurt. But to the actualist, these considerations do not change that the man has done wrong by causing some bad.

Driver's view is direct because it assesses actions and character traits directly. Directness is best understood by means of understanding indirectness. An indirect version of Driver's view would hold that moral assessment of actions should be done based on whether they are manifestations of vices or virtues. If this view were held directly, then the actions and character traits are morally assessed by their outcome directly. If someone were to hold that giving to charity was good because it was a manifestation of benevolence, then they are holding an indirect view. Conversely, a view would be direct if the charity was assessed as is, or if the benevolence as assessed as is.

With Driver's view outlined, I now discuss moral luck.

²³² Driver is not the only SAD externalist. There are multiple benefits to systematist, one of which is outlined in this paper, and so systematist remains moderately popular.

²³³ See chapter 4 of Driver's *Uneasy Virtue*.

²³⁴ The scope of the systematist is up for debate: it could be that paying one's debts is systematically good but paying one's debts to a bigot leads to some systematic bad. I only wish to highlight on this discrepancy and not comment on it.

Moral Luck

In this section, I explain what moral luck is and explain how SAD externalism is able to avoid it. I hold that it is a serious problem, and one that ought to be avoided. As this paper goes on to argue, I consider the problem of moral luck to be far more serious than dream morality.

First, what is moral luck? I understand moral luck as happening whenever an agent can be accurately morally judged even though some significant part of what the agent is being assessed for is outside of their control.²³⁵ There are specific sorts of moral luck. Nagel gives four sorts in his famous paper “Moral Luck”²³⁶: resultant, circumstantial, constitutive, and casual luck. Briefly:

1. Resultant luck is “luck in the way things turn out.”²³⁷ Alternatively, it is when the result of one’s action or intention or character trait is merely lucky or unlucky. I give an example of resultant luck after listing the sorts of luck.
2. Circumstantial luck is “luck in the circumstances one finds oneself in.”²³⁸ For instance, if someone was born into immense wealth and was able to donate a large fraction of to charity the mere ability to donate that is a product of luck; their being born into a wealthy family was beyond their control.
3. Constitutive luck is “luck in who one is, or in the traits or dispositions that one has.”²³⁹ There are many different instances of constitutive luck: someone may be said to have inherited their mother’s patience or their father’s short temperedness. Some of it may be genetic, or some of it may be environmental.
4. Causal luck is “luck in how one is determined by antecedent circumstances.”²⁴⁰ Nagel equates causal luck to classical problems of free will.

For the purposes of my paper, I focus on resultant moral luck. I do this because the others seem less problematic and potentially harder to avoid.²⁴¹

Here is an example of resultant moral luck:

A man is playing golf on his holidays. He is a good golf player and takes the appropriate steps to make sure people are not downrange when he swings. By freak happenstance, a golf ball he has fired away strikes a young caddy. This happens despite the golfer taking steps to avoid striking a caddy. He yells “fore” and checks for people before he swings. The young caddy is hit in the head and has a painful bruise.

²³⁵ See Nelkin’s 2021 entry into the SEP “Moral Luck” for more on this.

²³⁶ Nagel (1979)

²³⁷ Nelkin (2021)

²³⁸ Nelkin (2021)

²³⁹ Nelkin (2021)

²⁴⁰ Nagel (1979: 60)

²⁴¹ By this, I mean it is unclear that causal luck *even is* avoidable. However, it seems that embracing causal luck is not a black mark against one’s normative view. It is certainly less of a black mark than resultant luck.

By some lights, the golfer has done something wrong. They have taken steps that cause harm, and for some people that is sufficient to judge someone's action as wrong. However, these people are saying that the golfer is a victim of moral luck.

However, ethical systems that lead to cases of moral luck are often avoided and with good reason. The most common criticism of moral luck is that it is unfair. Bernard Williams explains: "Anything that which is not the product of happy or unhappy contingency is no proper object of moral assessment, and no proper determinant of it, either."²⁴² While most in the moral luck debate have focused on blame and praise²⁴³, Williams' quote extends to wrongdoing and right-doing as well.²⁴⁴ If we want our morality to be fair, and I take this to be a thing we do want and rightly so, then we ought not assess an agent based on things wholly or mostly outside of their control. If we allow for cases of moral luck, then we have a moral system which unfairly judges people for expressions of their agency for features that were outside of their control. This seems a damning criticism.

While not conclusive, it is worth noting that that moral luck is widely understood as damning. I do not think this means that it *is* damning, but it gives my point rhetorical force. There are plenty of philosophers already trying to avoid moral luck. As Cowan notes, it is a primary motivation for internalism *and* for a systematic externalism. There is a real and consistent desire to escape moral luck.

There are two things to say about moral luck before moving to the next section. The first is that I have restricted my focus of resultant moral luck. As Hartman notes, the denial of resultant moral luck has been called the "the standard view" by Mackenzie²⁴⁵ and "the orthodox view" by Ferrante.²⁴⁶ Hartman believes that this asymmetrical view²⁴⁷ is a poor one, but his view is not the majority. Others have argued that the fairness objection *only* targets resultant moral luck.²⁴⁸ Importantly, though, almost *everyone*²⁴⁹ seems to think resultant moral luck is a problem and so I rest my focus on that.

The second thing is to say that while I am focusing on right and wrong, it might be that blame, and praise are sometimes appropriate for dream acts. But this something that it is better to cover in a later chapter aimed at moral responsibility in dreams. For now, we are assuming that the no special condition clause is true, so minimally agents are open to some moral assessment. The lowest level of that assessment has been my focus.

²⁴² Williams (1981:20)

²⁴³ For an example, see Hartman (2019).

²⁴⁴ Williams might be wrong to this, but I do not think so. Cowan pointed out that it does not seem unfair to classify the careful golfer's actions as wrong, but blamelessly wrong. I discuss this briefly in the naïve externalist and moral luck section near the end of the paper.

²⁴⁵ Mackenzie (2017:95)

²⁴⁶ Ferrante (2009:276)

²⁴⁷ Mackenzie's labels views that only find *some* moral luck (eg. resultant) problematic asymmetrical.

²⁴⁸ For two examples of different framings, see Khoury (2018) and Talbert (2017).

²⁴⁹ Some people do accept moral luck and revise either their understanding of moral luck or argue that moral luck is inevitable because of metaphysical commitments concerning free will. For more, see the SEP on moral luck.

By SAD externalist lights, the golfer *has not* done anything wrong! Factors external to their agency, here the young caddy being hurt by his actions, are not what dictates the morality quality of his action. As introduced earlier, it is the *systematic* outcomes. A coarse analysis would say that being careful systematically leads to good outcomes whereas a finer analysis would say that good golf etiquette systematically leads to good outcomes. So, because of the systematism of Driver's SAD externalism she's able to avoid moral luck. This is a massive benefit to Driver's view.

In this short section, I have outlined what moral luck is; which sort of moral luck I am interested in; why moral luck looks so problematic; and how Driver's view is able to avoid moral luck. In the next section, I explain how Driver's view leads to dream morality.

SAD Externalism and Dream Morality

In this section I describe and explain Cowan's argument that if we replace evaluational internalism in the standard argument with SAD externalism, then this new standard argument still has dream morality as its conclusion.²⁵⁰ With Driver's position explained, we can now understand the following argument Cowan gives:

1. Actions are right or wrong depending on whether they are token types that produce good or bad systematically.
2. While dreaming, we sometimes perform actions that are tokens of types that produce good or bad systematically.
3. Dreamers are not always in a special condition of moral immunity.
4. Therefore, dream morality is possible and actual.

In defending one, Cowan explains that it is reasonable to assume that SAD externalism can only talk about systematism *if* it talks about types of actions. A token is one instance of a type. An example to clarify: a type of action might be harming someone. A token of that type would be swinging a fist at a child. If your account were finer grained, you might think that an action aimed at harming a child is a type of action, and a token of that type is harming a specific child. Cowan writes that "Token actions don't have systematic consequences, per se. Rather, actions have systematic effects by being tokens of types whose instances can collectively be said to do so."²⁵¹ Remember too that "action" means an expression of agency, and so can include intentions and decisions.

To defend two, here is an example. Barb Sander's dream that she is having a wonderful affair with Cary Grant.

Cary Grant and I are having a wonderful affair. He and I have a secret apartment we meet at. I am falling in love with another man. I take him to the apartment to have him meet Cary. Cary is in the

²⁵⁰ Remember, the orthodoxy is being assumed.

²⁵¹ Cowan (2021: 11)

apt. looking cute and silly like he does in his comedy movies. He opens the door and says, "Why are the three of you just standing there in a line." Some woman is with us. He says that will give away where our secret apartment is. He is a little upset.²⁵²

In the dream, she believes that she is having an affair and is doing so willingly. This appears to be a token of the general type of "intending to have an affair."²⁵³ Systematically, intending to have an affair leads to bad outcomes and so intending to have an affair is wrong.

Premise three is the subject of its own chapter, but for now it is worth saying that Driver endorses P3 in her attempt to harm the internalist and get the standard argument going. Remember, she believes that dream morality is problematic to endorse. Cowan also endorses P3 in his argument against the naïve externalist, which have been carved out elsewhere.

And so, the conclusion follows and the only avenue out seems to be rejecting P2 since P1 and P3 are accepted by Driver in her attempt to show a perceived problem with internalism. Cowan proposes that the SAD externalist offer a specific kind of fine-grained account of token types. He writes that the SAD externalist might argue that the "dream action of cheating is not a token of the act-type of cheating but is instead cheating *while non-lucidly dreaming*." The idea is that if we make the account fine grained in the right way, then there is no systematic consequence to the actions. Cowan continues that we need reasons to adopt this account, and the reason ought not be "I just really don't want to endorse dream morality." He considers the proposal that these actions have different contents backing them. This action may be different if it refers to the fact one is dreaming; rather than being a token type of being willing to cheat, it is a token type of being willing to cheat while dreaming. Cowan argues that it's phenomenologically implausible to think that we perform dream actions with content that references that we are dreaming while non-lucidly dream.²⁵⁴ This, he remarks, may seem weak but phenomenology is important in motivating the orthodoxy, and to dismiss appeals to it would undermine Driver's argument against the internalist.

But I cannot appeal to this, because defending Driver's argument against the internalist is not my focus. I offer a different reason to dismiss this objection: if it were the case that we had the token type of willing to cheat in a dream, then we would think that we were aware that we were dreaming. But in non-lucid dreams, we are not. This is very similar to the line that Cowan gives, but I think I can make this point without appealing to phenomenology and instead say this objection rests on understanding what dreams are. Non-lucid dreams are, by definition, are dreams where the dreamer is not aware of the dream

²⁵² Barb Sanders #4118. Recorded 2001-06-13.

²⁵³ Remember, this is true *only if* we are treating the orthodoxy as true. This is an assumption both Driver and Cowan make. I discuss it later in the chapter.

²⁵⁴ As a reminder, a key distinction between lucid dreaming and non-lucid dreaming is that in cases of lucid dreaming the dream knows that they are dreaming.

itself and cannot distinguish between being asleep and being awake. So, such an objection may work for lucid dreamers but does not work for non-lucid dreamers.

The last objection Cowan considers is that we take a less fine-grained approach. Instead, we understand dreaming as at type of something else. He cites Hobson's claim that "dreaming is not a model of psychosis. It is a psychosis."²⁵⁵ Among folk, dreaming is sometimes compared to drunkenness or being in a more bestial state with less rational control over yourself. But none of these seem to systematically lead to the bad: intending to cheat while drunk, or more bestial, or in a state of psychosis still leads systematically to the bad! It is still, by SAD externalist lights, wrong.

I offer a rejoinder: if the SAD externalist persists that *while dreaming* is enough to differentiate token types it seems like they simply must abandon the systematism. They cannot appeal to phenomenology, and they cannot appeal to awareness, and they cannot appeal to a coarser grained approach. What is left but to say dream acts are not token types because they simply do not produce consequences? This is a poor answer because it looks to abandon systematism. For instance, if all that differentiates a successful cheater and an unsuccessful cheater is one's success, and we take them to be different token types, then we have abandoned systematism and fallen back into the problem of moral luck.

In this section, I have given Cowan's defense of what I called the new standard argument against the externalist. I have explained how he supports the argument, as well as offered some additional support of my own. I now give my own argument, like one discussed in a previous chapter, before pitting moral luck and dream morality against each other.

Elsewhere, I briefly discuss a functionalist account of mental states and posited that both a narrow functionalism and broad functionalism might lead to dream morality.²⁵⁶ This was aimed at dissuading someone from thinking a different account of mental states might get one away from dream morality. Here, I want to repurpose that argument into something more general to argue that we have good reason to believe that dream acts are token types of waking acts if we assume the orthodoxy is true.

In normal cases of dreaming, the person dreaming is in a state of muscle atonia. Muscle atonia is when our muscles are weakened and their ability to animate restricted. The brain, in normal cases of REM sleep, signals the body which leads to reduced muscle tone, and eventually muscle paralysis. As a result, we lie peacefully in REM sleep. However, in REM sleep behaviour disorder cases, muscle atonia does not occur. This leads to people enacting their dreams. Dreamers who enacting their dreams are capable of "talking, yelling, punching, kicking, sitting, jumping from the bed, arm flailing and grabbing."²⁵⁷ Put simply, without muscle atonia people try to preform actions while dreaming. Here is an example inspired

²⁵⁵ Hobson (1999: 44)

²⁵⁶ Not exclusively: one needs to hold specific views about moral evaluation.

²⁵⁷ This explanation is taken from WebMD's article on REM sleep disorder.

by one of Cowan's: let us say that I am having a vivid dream where I am in a fight with a child. Rabid and small, he comes at me with gnashing teeth. I swing wildly at him. Without muscle atonia, we would expect that in my bed I would be trashing around trying to avoid bites and connect fists. This is good evidence that dream acts are of the same sort as waking acts.²⁵⁸

An objection one might have is that it is possible that, rather than dream acts as being the same sort of act as their waking counterparts, that dream actions are better likened to play actions. In waking life, we often engage in pretense action: while engaged in play, I might act like an animal while playing a game. In a play, I might act like a serial killer or an expert swordsman. So, it could be the case that in these cases without muscle atonia we are engaging in this sort of pretense play, rather than the sort of actions the orthodoxy would typically describe you as undertaking. I have two counters: (1) if the orthodoxy is true then dreams are not being described as imaginative play. Common comparisons include hallucination and illusion. In those cases, one seems to act in a genuine, non-pretense, way. This is because (2) pretense actions seem to require some belief that someone is participating in pretense. The type of action one undertakes when one is knowingly participating in a farce is far different from the type of action one takes when one is a victim of a farce!²⁵⁹ So, this objection that muscle atonia cases do not provide sufficient reason to think that dream acts of the same sort of act as waking acts looks false.²⁶⁰

So, when awake, my intention to punch a child is informed by certain beliefs and then attempts to manifest as certain action. It appears the exact same thing here as happened in the dream. I have certain beliefs, and these lead to an attempt to manifest a certain action. We can see that attempt manifest in cases where the only difference is that my efforts at harming a child are frustrated by disabled muscles and a lack of child in punching distance.

To some, this might seem like a straightforward case of moral luck: I was merely lucky that I was dreaming. But the systematist does not say that; they say moral luck is something to avoid and so I should not count myself lucky as I really did do something wrong. For Driver, this is an issue! She has claimed that dream morality is something to be avoided, and that internalists being forced into accepting dream morality is a good reason to favour SAD externalism over internalism. As we have seen, SAD externalism is also forced into accepting dream morality and therefore loses that edge that Driver wants her view to have. In the next section, I examine a different sort of externalism – naïve externalism – to see if it avoids dream morality.

²⁵⁸ This is explored in the context of *sui generis* dream actions later, but for now is interesting and prudential for the arguments at hand.

²⁵⁹ Imagine a scenario where someone tries to kill someone with a fake gun while not knowing it is fake. In this case, they seem to be doing something wrong because, at least to them, the gun *is* real.

²⁶⁰ Pretend play is discussed in next chapter.

Naïve Externalism and Dream Morality

Driver gives a definition of externalism as “the evaluation externalist holds that the moral quality of an action is determined by factors external to her agency.”²⁶¹ For instance, if I were to give to charity the externalist might say that this action is right because it is good, and it is good because giving to charity helps people and improves their welfare which is itself good. Driver defends an externalism focused on action and character traits. For Driver, a virtue is right *because* of the consequences it produces, and a vice is wrong *because* of the outcomes it leads to. The virtue of “giving to charity” or “being kind” are right because of the good caused by my donating. So far, we have looked at a complex version of externalism: SAD externalism. Now I want to take this definition at face value and discuss naïve externalism. With reference to dream morality, I think the naïve externalist position is captured by the first hurdle the dream morality thesis faces:

To many {dream morality} seems odd, because in a dream, presumably, one’s willings have no actual consequences. The lie told in a dream has no actual bad effects since in the dream no actual persons are led astray, nor is there any serious prospect they will be.²⁶²

So, I understand the naïve externalist to be giving a simple view that it is merely the consequences that matter. And, as some people might think, this view avoids dream morality because dreams do not have consequences. Cowan argues that the naïve externalist *is* committed to dream morality. I argue it is not.

To begin, Driver’s understanding of “consequence” is too narrow. She has dismissed dream morality because it seems unlikely that one’s lying in a dream is unlikely to deceive any *real* person. But this is not the only way that someone’s dreams may have consequence.

There is anecdotal and some empirical evidence that dream morality might be entailed by naïve externalism. There are instances of creativity seemingly being caused by dreams. Anecdotally, Mary Shelly famously saw Frankenstein’s monster in a dream. This inspired her to write the novel. James Cameron’s vision of Arnold Schwarzenegger as the terminator appeared to him in a dream. Dimitri Mendeleev said that his way of organizing the periodic table came to him in a dream, and Otto Loewi’s experiment that proved nerve signals in the brain were chemically transmitted, which earned him a Noble Prize, came to him in a dream. There is some data to suggest this is not limited to Noble Prize winners or

²⁶¹ Driver (2007: 1)

²⁶² Driver (2007:8)

famous artists. Schredl and Erlacher found that 8% report that dreams increased their waking creativity. 45% of those surveyed said they had ideas come from a dream at least twice a year.²⁶³

Similarly, data supports that people often make decisions that are informed by their dreams. Pagel and Vann found that just under one in five people reported that dreams affect their decision to do something sometimes, often, or always. A further 30% said that dreams affect how they see themselves. Pagel and Vann also found that dreams can shape how people see their relationships, and how they see others. Pagel and Vann, then, found that dreams can impact beliefs that can impact waking life *as well as* having a direct²⁶⁴ effect on the decisions people make.²⁶⁵ The counter position here is that it is unclear that there is any expression of agency in these dreams that has a consequence to it: these cases (and the Schredl & Erlacher cases) do not distinguish between the narrative or content of the dream and the actions undertaken in a dream. Plausibly, a naïve externalist wishing to avoid the dream morality could say that it is sometimes the case that experiencing a dream has some consequence. This is different from some action in the dream having some consequence, which is what would be necessary for the dream morality thesis to obtain.

The last set of cases I discuss are cheating dreams. Here, we might have a straightforward expression of agency while dreaming²⁶⁶ and it seems as though there may be a consequence to these expressions of agency. If “passivity” is a possibility in other dreams, these dreams definitively have actions. Still, the naïve externalist has a response. Take the following two dreams:

Cary Grant and I are having a wonderful affair. He and I have a secret apartment we meet at. I am falling in love with another man. I take him to the apartment to have him meet Cary. Cary is in the apt. looking cute and silly like he does in his comedy movies. He opens the door and says, "Why are the three of you just standing there in a line." Some woman is with us. He says that will give away where our secret apartment is. He is a little upset.²⁶⁷

and

I'm at an office. Marv C and I are very attracted to each other, sexually. He moves toward me, trying to get me to kiss him. I want to, but he's married and so I choose not to get involved with him. He keeps following me and cuddling up. I'd be tempted but then I'd see his wife or think she's there. He kisses me sweetly with great sexual need and I feel a powerful surge of desire and I can't fight it anymore, so I respond and we make love. It's wonderful.²⁶⁸

²⁶³ See Schredl & Erlacher (2010).

²⁶⁴ By direct, I mean what happens in the dream (and perhaps what one does in the dream) is what is having the effect people make.

²⁶⁵ See Pagel & Vann (1995).

²⁶⁶ Remember, we are assuming the orthodoxy so the distinction between what one does in the dream and what one is doing while dreaming partially collapses. If one is *attempting* to cheat in the dream, then it follows that one is *attempting* to cheat in the dream.

²⁶⁷ Barb Sanders #4118. Recorded 2001-06-13.

²⁶⁸ Barb Sanders #195. Recorded 1991-11-15.

In these cases, there is an expression of agency. And that expression of agency is directly related to the content of the dream. Recall Driver's lying example. Barb Sanders having these affairs in her dreams does not mean that she is having an affair at all; she is not having sex with Cary Grant or indeed having sex at all! But does that expression of agency have a consequence to it? But this is not the only possible consequence of a cheating dream.

Selterman, Apertroaia, Riela, Aron's paper "Dreaming of You: Behaviour and Emotion in Dreams of Significant Others Predict" gives insight into the type of consequences dreams might have. Selterman et al took 61 university students and over two weeks. The students had to have been in a relationship for at least 6 months and the median relationship length was over a year. They collected over 840 dreams. 87% of participants reported at least one dream containing their significant other of the two-week period. They found that:

Jealous dream emotion was associated with increased post-dreaming conflict ($\beta = .29, p < .03$), such that when people reported greater jealous emotion²⁶⁹ in dreams of their partners, they reported more conflict with their partners on the day after the dream.²⁷⁰

and

Dreamer infidelity predicted less love/intimacy on following days ($\beta = -.09, p = .01$), such that after dreaming about romantic involvement with an extradyadic partner, participants felt less love/intimacy toward their partner the next day. Similarly, dreams containing conflict predicted greater conflict on following days ($\beta = .13, p < .01$).²⁷¹

So, Selterman et al found a correlation between dream infidelity and less intimacy in your waking relationship. They also found jealousy and conflict in dreams predicted more jealousy in conflict in waking life. The conclusion that one might take from this is that dreams can, and often do, have a consequence.

I believe that all three cases that connect naïve externalism to dream morality can be argued against. I will do so by explaining how the objections Cowan uses to defend dream morality and naïve externalism fail.

Cowan defends against three criticisms of the claim that naïve externalism entails dream morality. The first criticism is that it is more likely that it is recalling dreams that have an effect; the second that the effects of dream actions are not always non-moral; and finally, that studies fail to differentiate between

²⁶⁹ As in, emotional jealousy within the dream.

²⁷⁰ Selterman et al (2014: 114)

²⁷¹ Selterman et al (2014: 114)

dream content and dream action. Cowan is modest in his claim: he writes that this is far from settled, but the current evidence at least suggests that naïve externalism is committed to dream morality.

The first objection is that it is not dream acts that have an effect, but instead our recollection of dream actions that do. For instance, it is not the dream-act of cheating that can lead to a lack of intimacy in the waking relationship but instead it is *remembering* the dream-act that leads to a lack of intimacy. Cowan offers two rebuttals: the explanation does not work with lucid dreams, and that remembering some action might still be sufficient for dream morality. Someone committed to avoiding dream morality must find fault with these responses.

To defend the claim, Cowan explains a study by Erlacher and Schredl (2010), one by Stumbrys et al (2016) and one by Schadlich et al (2017). In these studies, participants were asked to practice some skill while lucid dreaming to see if they would improve. For instance, Erlacher and Schredl chose the action of tossing a coin into a cup. These studies all found that practicing simple skills in the dream typically lead to one being better at those skills in waking life. For us, I understand the person arguing against the naïve externalist to be saying there are cases where we do some X in dreams, and it has some output Y in waking life. We can see this in cases where one is asked to practice. The naïve externalist seems able to say that these are interesting, but not conclusive.

The first argument against this line of reasoning is against the studies themselves. There are some reasons to think these studies are non-conclusive. Each study is only conducted on a small amount of people (20 participants, 68 participants, and 18 participants). Two of the studies say that these are not conclusive: Schadlich et al write these results should be “considered preliminary”²⁷² and give us good reason to investigate further. Erlacher and Schredl say they cannot tell if the cause for improvement was related to motivation or lucid dreaming. These are non-trivial issues. The issue of a small sample size should be obvious, but perhaps even worse is that the authors of the studies themselves are not sure what the causal relationship is. Dreams might be a symptom of motivation and not a cause of improvement in and of themselves.

Another retort could be that we should not draw conclusions wrought from studying lucid dreams and apply them to non-lucid dreams; a more important difference is the difference between lucid dreaming and non-lucid dreaming that gives us good reasons to doubt that things that can happen in lucid dreaming to are not necessarily able to happen in non-lucid dreaming.

The differences between lucid dreaming and nonlucid dreaming give us reasons to think that while you might be able to practice in lucid dreaming it is unlikely you will be able to in nonlucid dreaming.

²⁷² Schadlich et al. (2016: 2365) and Schadlich et al. (2016: 2371)

Nonlucid dreams are characterized by bizarreness²⁷³, reduced metacognition,²⁷⁴ a lack of future orientated planning, and a lack of reflection.²⁷⁵ Hobson and Clark both argue that dreams are akin to psychotic episodes where dreamers are ‘delirious’.²⁷⁶ In contrast, lucid dreams are characterized by ‘insight, control and dissociation’ with insight being the most the essential to lucid dreaming. Insight is loosely defined as a kind of awareness of one’s state. This involves knowing that one is dreaming but can and often does reach further. Insight into what one is doing and one’s surroundings is one example. Insight is also linked to control.²⁷⁷ This is control over one’s self and over the dream content more generally. With lucid dreaming, it is possible to have a goal-orientated task that you willfully perform without much distraction.

An interesting note from Stumbry’s paper is that not all those who practiced in lucid dreams improved. Stumbry’s split his participants into groups depending on how much distraction they had in their lucid dream. As we know, this is likely linked to how much control they had in each lucid dream. Only those participants that had few or no distractions had any improvement. Their improvement was comparable to those who practiced in their head. Stumbry calls this “mental practice.” It is the visualization of the task, concentrated on and repeated.

Imagine that I pick up a guitar once a day and strum along without thinking about playing guitar. I do not think about composition or sound, and I have no goal in mind. Is there an expectation that I would get better at playing the guitar? I do not think so. Similarly, imagine I picked up a Rubik’s cube and practiced twisting it daily. But I had no intention to solve it, nor was I consciously thinking about what I was doing. This kind of mindless engagement seems unlikely to lead to any improvement, and the naïve externalist can likely say this is what non-lucid dreams are like.²⁷⁸ Similarly, these studies showed someone only improved if their dreams were not distracted. Non-lucid dreams are often wild and distraction filled, and often feel more mindless than mindful. So, the naïve externalist can argue against these studies on two fronts: more data is needed, and lucid dreams are relevantly different from non-lucid dreams.

So, for practice to be effective it must take place in a specific sort of lucid dream. Lucid dreams are characterized by insight, and the characteristic that looks most relevant to effective practice is discipline, repetition, visualization, repetition, and a lack of distraction. Are non-lucid dreams *ever* like this? The answer looks to be no: in fact, it seems that the defining features of lucid dreaming are what make it a space that *might be* suitable for practicing. Nonlucid dreams, by their definition, lack these

²⁷³ See Yu & Shen (2020).

²⁷⁴ See both, Yu & Shen (2020) and Voss et al. (2013).

²⁷⁵ See Hobson et al. (2000), Joli (2011) and Voss et al (2013).

²⁷⁶ See Hobson (2000) and Clark (2005) for more.

²⁷⁷ See Voss & Windt (2018).

²⁷⁸ Especially astute readers might have noticed a dialectical problem: it looks like the naïve externalist **may** be giving up the no special condition. I address this at the end of this discussion.

features. Therefore, even if we grant that these studies offer sufficient grounds to think that lucid dreams are a suitable place for practice, it seems unlikely that non-lucid dreams ever are.

Here is a worry: it seems that the naïve externalist might be giving up the no special condition thesis. As a reminder, the no special condition thesis is that non-lucid dreamers are not always in a state that would render them immune to moral evaluation. A worried reader might think that what I have said the naïve externalist could say to the skills study is close to denying this thesis. This is an issue, because for the purposes of the paper we are granting the no special condition thesis. However, I do not think what I have said constitutes a surrendering of the thesis: my claim is specific. I am saying that the condition that non-lucid dreamers are always in a state that we have reason to doubt practicing skills in their dreams would lead to improvement in those skills. It is not the claim that dreams cannot have consequences, but that we have reason to doubt that they specific sorts of consequences. I do not see myself as saying the naïve externalist has to deny the no special condition thesis.

In this next section, I stray closer to saying the naïve externalist is really just denying the no special condition. As a preemptive retort: is it possible to deny that naïve externalism leads to dream morality without denying the no special condition thesis? The answer seems to be yes – this is not a state that the dreamer is in unless we broadly understand the state they are in to be one that does not lead to moral consequences. I take it that we want the no special condition thesis to be (1) about the state that dreamers are in psychologically²⁷⁹ and (2) to be theory neutral. If the no special condition thesis is denied, one would think it would be denied independently of the other theses. I take it that if the naïve externalist can deny the no special condition in a way that other theorists (for instance, SAD externalists and Internalists) are unable to then no dialectical edge is being lost. That is, the naïve externalist is not denying the no special condition thesis in a general way, but in a way that only they have access to: they might be saying dreamer is in a state that means their actions do not have consequences.

Now, with that in mind, Cowan gives an example of an indirect consequence that he believes is comparable to the effects dreams might have. He writes:

...consider a case where I make a speech in which I defame a rival, knowing that this will be widely reported and cause bad effects; my speech only does so indirectly. Nevertheless, we might think that my speech was wrong, precisely because of its indirect production of these effects.²⁸⁰

The idea, then, is that even if dream actions only ever prime people to do some other action, here remembering that action that might ultimately lead to reporting that action, they still might be morally

²⁷⁹ In my chapter on the no special condition thesis, I understand the key questions to be about if dreamers are rational enough for moral responsibility and topics of that ilk. The main lines are not about whether dreams have consequences since those questions are better captured by discussing the other theses.

²⁸⁰ Cowan (2021:20)

assessable. The naïve externalist can argue that dreams do not seem analogous to such a case. Instead, they could say:

Consider a case where I dreamt that I made a speech to defame a rival. When I wake up, I remember the dream. I decide that this is something I should do in waking life. I give the speech and it is widely reported.

Here, the wrongdoing seems to occur when one has decided to do something. That one has a dream, or has a thought, may seem causally inert. In fact, with many dreams we recollect them and say “oh I would never do that!” This is often a response to cheating dreams. If we are tracking through the causal history of some wrongdoing to find its cause, it is also likely that the dream itself is not the cause. If we take the dream continuity hypothesis²⁸¹ to be true, then the cause for such a dream predates the dream. So, if there was some anger towards a rival while awake, that anger might manifest in the dream in this specific way. But the anger begins outside the dream, and those actions one takes also exists outside the dream. There is also a worry about placing this wrongdoing in the wrong place can be emphasized by cases around witnessing something. Consider a case where someone has discovered that their wife is cheating on them. They are shocked and hurt. They decide to take drastic action. They are going to catch their partner in the act and kill them! Do we really think the wrongdoing is in the discovery?

Cowan’s point is more nuanced: the mere fact that X is an indirect cause of Y does not disbar X from being morally wrong if Y is bad. This would be consistent with my case: let us say that vividly imagining having an affair has primed me to perform some affair. When confronted with the opportunity to have an affair, I leap at the chance. I do this partly and indirectly because of my imagination. Cowan thinks it is plausible that my vivid imagination is plausibly wrong in virtue of it being an indirect cause of some bad: my cheating. It seems plausible to me that the naïve externalist will only have to think my vivid imagination is wrong if it leads to some bad, and in dreams it never does. The naïve externalist can grant that indirect causes may be wrong, but that dreams are not indirect causes. Dreams are not, the naïve externalist can say, some new indirect cause but can insist that dreams are best understood as acausal and can do so for the reasons I have said above. Again, it looks as though the naïve externalist can avoid dream morality.

The second objection raised that Cowan deals with is that dreams do have waking effects, but they are never moral effects.²⁸² Those studies mentioned above only talk about practicing skills, and that is a motor skill. Are motor skills moralized? It does not seem so. In fact, it might be that doing immoral things

²⁸¹ The dream continuity hypothesis is explained elsewhere more richly and where more suited. Briefly, the dream continuity hypothesis is that dream content is most continuous with waking concepts and concerns. An example many, if not all, readers will be familiar with is anxiety dreams. Anxiety dreams manifest in many ways – from dreaming that one’s teeth are falling out to being back in school during an exam completely naked – but that anxiety was either a waking concern or caused by one. Then it manifests in the dream.

²⁸² Cowan (2021:20)

in the dream leads one to reflect on what made them immoral and they become *more* moral after that reflection. Cowan gives three responses: it is possible that reflecting on the dream may lead to effects one might not expect – like the dream-cheater who becomes repentant and successfully has a more intimate relationship – but it does not seem that this would always be the case. In fact, we have evidence to the contrary.²⁸³ Secondly, if the consequences were ones we were not expecting, it would still fall under dream morality. These actions still produce some good or bad, and therefore would be assessed as right or wrong. Finally, some of these skills might be morally assessable.

The naïve externalist can offer a rebuttal. I have already discussed the limitations of the studies used to support point two. This also undermines point three. Point one seems to, again, locate the right-doing and wrongdoing in the wrong place: for analogies sake, imagine that someone has read Sartre's classic *Age of Reason*. In the book, the protagonist cheats on his wife. If someone were to read that book and decide they ought to cheat on their wife, then it seems bizarre to locate the wrongdoing in reading the book. It is the reflection and decision that is right or wrong. And so, again the naïve externalist has something to say against the rebuttals and continues to avoid dream morality.

The final objection Cowan discusses is a limitation with the studies.²⁸⁴ The studies cited fail to distinguish between what we do in dreams and dream content. So, these studies do not support dream morality or negate it since they are not sufficiently targeted. Remember, dream morality is about the moral assessment of what we do in dreams. Cowan gives the example: it maybe the dreaming of infidelity can lead to a lack of intimacy. But that dream acting as a cheater has no consequence. Cowan responds that lucid dream studies mentioned above give us good reason to think that some dream acts can lead to outcomes, so why not others? I have given reasons already to think this does not work – specifically that lucid dream acts involve different circumstances than dream acts. The second answer Cowan gives is that cheating dreams are, by their nature, constituted by an action of cheating. This follows from what we know about the orthodoxy and how the distinction between in dreaming and while dreaming collapses. This answer seems right, but again the naïve externalist can raise a worry.

There is a methodological worry. We know that dreams are often continuous with waking life.²⁸⁵ So, it is unclear if acting jealously in dreams *causes* jealousy in waking life. It is unclear if acting in dreams *causes* a lack of intimacy. These might be mere symptoms of waking actions and concerns rather

²⁸³ See Selterman et al (2014). Selterman et al's research suggests that dream infidelity was an accurate predictor for less intimacy in waking relationships. Jealousy in the dream was also found to be tied to conflict in waking life.

²⁸⁴ Cowan (2021: 21)

²⁸⁵ The dream continuity hypothesis is explicated elsewhere.

than a cause of waking actions and concerns.²⁸⁶ ²⁸⁷ This issue, at least to me, seems impossible to settle right now. It seems plausible that dream acts could reinforce these waking emotions and that looks like a morally evaluable expression of agency. It seems plausible that someone could still be held evaluable for an action even if that action is a symptom of some other state. But plausibility does not seem enough, and the naïve externalist can once again query in the wrongdoing is really occurring in the dream and not some other place.

Each of the objections Cowan argues against, then, look fortifiable. The key objection I have raised is the reliance on small lucid dream studies. The inference made that what happens in lucid dreams plausibly could have in non-lucid dreams is not sufficiently defended, and we have good reasons to doubt that the conditions of non-lucid dreams are conducive to practice and learning. There are other worries: methodological and the location of the wrongdoing. I therefore conclude that naïve externalism can be defended against Cowan's objections.²⁸⁸ However, Driver's SAD externalism is less open to defence.

Driver's Argument Against Driver

Julia Driver has said that even one instance of dream morality is deeply problematic for a view. She uses this as dialectical leverage over an externalism. But as we have seen, her SAD externalism is committed to dream morality. Under pains of being consistent, does this mean that Driver should abandon SAD externalism? Here is an argument for that position:

1. If Driver wants to remain an externalist, Driver is either a systematic externalist or a naïve externalist.
2. Driver wants to remain an externalist.²⁸⁹
3. If a view leads to dream morality, it is absurd.
4. SAD externalism is absurd.
5. One should not hold absurd views.
6. One should be a naïve externalist.

This mimics the general argument of "Dream Immorality." Driver argues that either one is an internalist or an externalist,²⁹⁰ and given that internalism is committed to dream morality, then one

²⁸⁶ Recall the Selterman study. In that study, we saw a connection between cheating dreams and a lack of intimacy. But the lack of intimacy and cheating dreams could merely be correlated: both might stem from some waking desire to cheat or some turbulence in the relationship. The dream and the lack of intimacy may not be causally related. In the cases where there might appear to be some causation, it seems that how one feels about the dream is having more of an impact than the dream itself. The response, then, to the dream appears morally interesting and not the dream itself.

²⁸⁷ This is a methodological worry that one might have more generally. This is not an attack specific to Robert Cowan's argument, but one that I think is nonetheless valid.

²⁸⁸ There may be others. I would be excited to see them!

²⁸⁹ For the purposes of this paper, remember that Driver has argued against internalism. However, she may opt for a view that is neither externalist nor internalist eg. some deontological accounts. This move might be open to some but would be truly stunning if Driver made it.

²⁹⁰ I set aside hybrid accounts for this paper. Readers are invited to keep them in mind.

should be an externalist. As I have argued, Driver's externalism leads to dream morality. But dream morality is not an inevitability: naïve externalism does not lead to dream morality.

As Cowan argues, Driver's position endorsing dream morality means that she loses a dialectical advantage over the internalist. I am going a step further by saying that the naïve externalist, by Driver's own admission as gained a rhetorical advantage over her. Does this mean that Driver should abandon SAD externalism? I argue not. In the next section, I argue that naïve externalism does lead to moral luck, while SAD externalism avoids it. This is a far bigger rhetorical edge than not endorsing dream morality. Therefore, Driver's position is salvaged even if she is forced into dream morality.

Returning to Moral Luck: Naïve Externalism

Earlier in the paper, I argued that a key benefit of SAD externalism²⁹¹ is that it avoids problematic moral luck cases. In this section, I show that naïve externalism is not able to avoid those cases. Recall the case from earlier:

A man is playing golf on his holidays. He is a good golf player and takes the appropriate steps to make sure people are not downrange as he swings. By freak happenstance, a golf ball he has fired strikes a young caddy despite the golfer taking steps to avoid striking a caddy. He yells "four" and checks for people before he swings. The young caddy is hit in the head and has a painful bruise.

The naïve externalist is committed to saying that the careful golfer has done something wrong! They have acted in a way that has directly led to harm, which is bad. That's sufficient for wrongdoing under the naïve externalist account. They may say that although the careful golfer has acted wrongly and caused some bad, they are *blameless* for this. As discussed, being committed to moral luck – which the naïve externalist is here – is deeply problematic. The answer that it is a blameless wrong is meant to remove the main bite of moral luck; namely that it is unfair. But this move seems mistaken, and the judgment still unfair! The golfer did everything right, and to say that he has done wrong *because* he hit someone seems to mistake some bad outcome for some wrong outcome. It seems unfair to judge this as a blameless wrong, even if it is less problematic that saying the action is straightforwardly wrong.

So, the naïve externalist may be able to avoid dream morality when put under the same conditions that Driver puts internalism and SAD externalism under but seems unable to avoid moral luck.

Picking a Bullet to Bite and Summarizing the Arguments

As I have set it up externalists have a choice to make: they can either embrace a theory that leads to moral luck or they can embrace a theory that leads to dream morality. In this section I argue that moral

²⁹¹ And internalism.

luck is the more unenviable of the two options. Therefore, externalists should opt into the theory that leads to dream morality.

The implausibility thesis, which is the thesis that dream morality is implausible, is the focus of a future chapter. To properly examine that thesis, we have to investigate features of dreams and dreamers that are out of the scope of this chapter. Namely, under what conditions do dreamers have moral responsibility. Here, in this current chapter, I want to focus on how dream morality is more palatable than moral luck without relying on content from future chapters. First, I argue that moral luck would be far more common than dream morality.

A non-systematist would have to say moral luck is commonplace. Our actions have lucky, and often unlucky, consequences all the time. Cases of negligence are commonly cited examples: two usually conscientious people fail to check their brakes before going on a long drive. Only one's brake failure leads to hitting someone else. Another example of negligence could be two people forget to post an important letter to a charity, in one case the charity makes do without their donation and in the other that donation was essential to saving lives. Most commonly, we see people try to do the right thing all the time. We also see these attempts fail often. All these failures are victims of moral luck, and in some circumstances those successes might be victims of positive moral luck.

By contrast, dream morality would be comparatively rare. One reason for the comparative rarity is that a lot of what we do in dreams is not problematic. In fact, even cases that look problematic at first blush might not be problematic. Here is an example: a married person who is in a monogamous relationship has a dream where they have sex in their dream. They may wake up and feel guilty, but this guilt is misplaced: so long as the content of the dream was just that they were having sex with someone else *and not* that they were cheating on their partner then the systematist will likely say that they had the non-problematic intention to have consensual sex and not the problematic intention of intending to cheat. While not within the scope of this chapter, it is also likely the case that dreamers are only morally responsible some of the time.²⁹² This does more to diminish the frequency of dream morality. So, moral luck looks far more common than dream morality.

A second difference between moral luck and dream morality is that dream morality is that dreamers might not be robustly responsible for some of their dream actions. Instead, we might think that dreamers are sometimes worthy of disteem. Smuts believes that dream actions are good candidates for actions that are worthy of disteem. He writes that if actions are beyond our control but come from our character are morally wrong then they are likely not worthy of full blame. Smuts discusses disteem

²⁹² See my chapter on implausibility.

mainly within the context of fantasy and so those cases function as good examples: if someone were to have a fantasy (for instance, of assaulting a coworker) that they did not will but that came from their character then we often still dollop shame on them because this is an act worthy of disteem. I return to a discussion on disteem later in thesis, but for now a brief discussion shows that lower levels of moral evaluation are potentially appropriate for at least some dream actions. The contrast with moral luck is that non-systematists would likely think that (likely because of the state that agents are in) that they are more robustly morally responsible.

The third, although likely least important, difference between the two is that moral luck is near universally reviled while dream morality is not. I discuss this at length later, but giving a truncated version here is appropriate. There are many examples of non-philosophers being worried about dream morality and taking it as a plausible thesis. Dream morality as a philosophical thesis has been poorly explored especially in the context of dream actions. Although, Malcolm, Mann, Augustine, Cowan and me all treat dream morality as at least plausible. It is not universally reviled and those who write on dream morality specifically seem to, for the most part, find it plausible.²⁹³

The forth point I wish to discuss is that dream morality is not unfair. Unfairness is the biggest criticism of moral luck. It is unclear that dream morality leads to an unfair judgement of an agent. If you were told by someone that they had violent dreams where they did cruel things all of the time, you might think that is wrong and it might change how you view them. It would likely not change your view of them completely, but it does seem relevant. The non-systematist can offer a similar account, but it is still unintuitive. Let's say that the non-systematist accounts for moral luck by saying that these are blameless wrongs. But this is still unfair and undermines moral judgement. Here is one last moral luck case: imagine someone who is building a treehouse for their kid. They have experience building such things and know how to spot quality and appropriate materials. They do so. But unbeknownst to them, they are sold rotted wood. This is a special rot that one cannot spot with usual methods, and the wood appears as normal. The man builds the treehouse, and all seems well. Later in the summer, the wood gives way and their child falls out of the treehouse hurting themselves. To say this is a blameless wrong, at least to me, still looks cruel and unfair. They appear to have done everything right from doing things they have experience doing and using, and the systematist would agree.

Finally, I want to discuss the size of the bullet. By this, I mean the 'cost' of endorsing moral luck compared to the 'cost' of endorsing dream morality. Williams says that we should, and do, want our

²⁹³ This does not mean they all believe that the dream morality thesis is true. Just that they do not understand it as impossible.

moral systems to be fair. This is powerfully intuitive, he remarks. There is widespread agreement on this. Williams notes that endorsing moral luck would uproot our understanding of what ethics is meant to be because of how ingrained the idea of fairness is. The bullet, then, is huge. By contrast, dream morality does nothing as severe as undermine how we understand ethics. A bugbear of Driver's is that agents might, while dreaming, fulfil their obligations to charity. She worries that someone could therefore not have those obligations in waking life because they met those objections in the dream. I discuss this at length in the penultimate chapter of the main thesis, but the crux of my objection is this: if you fulfill those duties in the dream you are not justified in believing you do not have those obligations in waking life since you wake up and realise your meeting those obligations did not actually lead to you giving to charity.²⁹⁴ So, that 'cost' seems minor and the key problem with it is solved.²⁹⁵

In conclusion, moral luck is systematically avoided; considered powerfully unintuitive and when endorsed often looks commonplace. It therefore looks to be a serious problem. By contrast, dream morality is not systematically avoided; does not seem powerfully unintuitive and might be rare.

There are two sorts of conclusions that I offer here:

1. Any rhetorical edge gained over the SAD externalist by the naïve externalist is lost by having to endorse dream morality.
2. The rhetorical edge offered by dream morality is minimal.

My suggestion to Driver, then, is to remain a SAD externalist but to admit the standard argument against the internalist is not effective. The internalist, as we have seen, is also able to avoid moral luck but even if it were the case that it had to endorse dream morality²⁹⁶ that only renders it dialectically equal to SAD externalism in the context of this paper. This is contra Cowan's paper since Cowan argues that SAD externalism is unable to avoid dream morality. I am arguing that even if it does not, there is no real argument against the internalist here.

Some Objections to Consider

I want to end by considering some potential objections that have not already been covered. As a reminder before discussing objections, I am going to assume the same things Driver has already assumed to motivate her conclusion against the internalist. So, I am not going to suggest that Driver deny the no special condition thesis or dream orthodoxy. Both seem plausible responses one could make but Driver has then abandoned the purpose of "Dream Immorality." It is also the case, or at least I argue it is the

²⁹⁴ Externalists should be especially sympathetic to this.

²⁹⁵ Driver also discusses what I call 'The Double Life Problem'. This requires an exegesis of the no special condition to properly engage with. It is discussed, at length, later in the thesis.

²⁹⁶ All that matters for this paper is that Driver thinks this is true of the internalist.

case, that adopting an alternative ontology of dreams (here, the imagination theory of dreams) is not sufficient to avoid dream morality. I also argue, in a later chapter, the no special condition thesis holds.

The first of these objections is that dream morality is a case of moral luck. If it were the case that dream morality was merely an instance of moral luck, then one falling on prong of dream morality to avoid the moral luck prong is nonsensical. Here is an example to illustrate:

A man is golfing *in the dream*. He, *in the dream*, is a careless golfer. He makes no attempt to play safely. As a result, *in the dream*, he hits some poor caddy down range and injures him.

Given the orthodoxy, there is a collapse between *in the dream* and *while dreaming* for some of the features that we would take as morally evaluable: the dreaming golfer has these problematic beliefs and desires both *in the dream* and *while dreaming*. He really does attempt to play a game of golf carelessly. And while no one is actually hurt, it looks as though he just gets lucky that no one was hurt; it seems that he was lucky that he was dreaming and not **actually** playing golf.

The SAD externalist response is that there is no case of luck here because the object of proper moral assessment is the token type action of playing golf careless and that can be rightfully assessed as wrong. They cannot be the same thing since there are cases where they come apart.²⁹⁷ Perhaps a more modest objection is more effective: someone might claim that dream morality is problematic for the same reason as moral luck is problematic. Dream morality seems extremely unfair.

I think the reason why dream morality might seem unfair to many is because there is some sort of special condition that the dreamer is in that renders them immune to moral evaluation. Once we grant the no special condition thesis, it is unclear what exactly would be unfair about dream morality.²⁹⁸

An objection I anticipate from Driver is that her view, SAD externalism, avoids both moral luck and dream morality. I imagine this objection says that dream morality is avoidable because dream actions are not token types of actual actions. I believe I have addressed some of this in the main body of this chapter but here is another explicit reason to deny this: It is hard to think of why you would exclude dream actions unless it was some ad hoc reason. The line might be something like “part of what makes some thing a token type X is its ability to, at least sometimes, manifest X.” The worry here is that this could collapse back to moral luck, and it is unclear that dream actions don’t at least sometimes manifest in X.

A related worry, and one that I think I am able to head off correctly, is that dream morality may itself be an instance of moral luck. One worry that one might have is that that dream morality is itself a case of moral luck. The worry, put briefly, is as follows: there is some way, either in narrative, content or

²⁹⁷ The criticism that dream morality cases might be instances of moral luck might be more fruitful against the internalist.

²⁹⁸ Dream morality looks unfair if agents do not express agency or are not themselves, for instance. Both of these seem attacks on the no special condition thesis which is being assumed in the paper.

action, that dream that what we do in the dream is a matter of luck (or a lack of luck). I want to argue against this.

It is important to recall the context within which this chapter is written: the orthodoxy has been assumed to be true. Dreamers *are* forming the same sort of propositional attitudes they are forming when awake. The intentions, desires and beliefs are *not* sui generis.

With that in mind, let us spell out the case for moral luck. The worry goes that dreams do not seem *willed*.²⁹⁹ If it were the case that dream content, narrative or actions were not chosen then, we might worry, that dream morality is plausibly a case of moral luck; that these features that I am proposing ought to be the proper object of moral evaluation are outside of the agent's control and therefore ill-suited to moral judgement.

So, the first issue was that dream situations are *not* chosen. It is worth remarking that this is not always true. There are two sorts of cases that spring to mind. The first case is one remarked upon already in the thesis: there are cases where dreamers are able to re-enter dreams and do so willfully. Potentially, there are a variety of ways to do this³⁰⁰ but the most common appears to be waking up then going back to sleep with the intention of continue the dream you were just in. While it might be an open question as to whether you are consenting to performing certain actions within the dream, there is a reasonable expectation of narrative, content and action that likely renders one immune to a 'defense' of moral luck. The second set of cases are broader, but similar in kind, where a dreamer might have a reasonable expectation of certain dreams³⁰¹ and, therefore, so long as they do not take steps to avoid that dream narrative, content or action they can be thought of as reasonably consenting to that dream and therefore are not victims of moral luck.

These cases are rare. My hope is to offer a larger sample of cases where dreamers are clearly not victims, or benefactors, of moral luck. If the complaint is phrased as the dream narrative or dream content not being chosen, then one must remark that this is not sufficient for moral luck! Or, perhaps more minimally, these are not cases of 'problematic' moral luck. Recall Parfit's four sorts of moral luck. Cases of narrative and content in dreams are likely cases of constitutive and circumstantial luck. As a reminder, constitutive luck is luck in the way that agents are: their dispositions, beliefs, and character all seem shaped by features outside their control e.g. parents, environment and culture. Cases of circumstantial

²⁹⁹ This claim, that dreams do not seem willed, is interesting intuitive and seemingly unpopular: Ichikawa, a key proponent of the imagination theory, believes that dreams are (at least) the sort of thing that is under the control of the will. Much like intrusive imagery, we simply do not try (or try and fail) to 'banish' dreams.

³⁰⁰ For instance, it is possible the keeping a dream journal and actively thinking about previous dreams can help one re-visit or continue dreams they have already had.

³⁰¹ I have talked about this option at length in a previous chapter.

moral luck are those cases where the agent's circumstance is beyond their control. The case Parfit brings to mind are those who, by luck of circumstance, ended up being Nazis *outside* of Germany in the 1930s. Had they been in Germany, though, they would have been party to all manner of immoral crimes. I argue there is a parallel here with dreams: we might think that dream content is (at least in regular cases) not chosen and those factors that contribute to dream narrative and content are beyond our control. And these are cases of 'luck'³⁰², but unavoidable luck. In fact, one might think that we have *more* control over dream content and narrative than we do over some previously mentioned features like constitutive upbringing. There is a way, as Freud remarks, that we must take responsibility for our dreams: "for what else are we meant to do with them?" And, of course, who else could they come from? Regardless, the types of moral luck mentioned here are, as remarked earlier, not morally problematic in the way resultant moral luck is.

Given the above, it is tempting to say that dream actions can, and sometimes actually do, come from us and are responses to circumstances that are not so beyond our control that we might see the agent as 'forced' to commit a certain action. And so, agents do not seem lucky or unlucky in dream morality. Still, one might worry that these actions do not seem volitional in the same way waking actions are. To discuss dream action I ask the reader to remember what has been said in the previous chapter about moral responsibility: it is an open question whether dream actions are volitional. However, so long as these actions can be appropriately traced to earlier volitional action then they seem prime candidates for moral evaluation, and not the consequence of luck. Again, predictability and preventability look like good conditions to look at for dream action.

An alternative approach here, for people whom are still uncomfortable with the prospect of dream morality, is to ask if an action can be thought of us lucky when it aligns with an agent's character. While I maintain that tracing accounts seem the most plausible, it is interesting to engage with the following.

Recall Augustine's dream:

During sleep where is my reason which, when I am awake, resists such suggestions and remains firm and undismayed even in face of the realities themselves? Is it sealed off when I close my eyes? Does it fall asleep with the senses of the body? *And why is it that even in sleep I often resist the attractions of these images*, for I remember my chaste resolutions and abide by them and give no consent to temptations of this sort?³⁰³

³⁰² I am happy to grant this for the sake of argument, but one could engage with the dream continuity hypothesis and claim that dream content does come from us in important, morally salient, ways.

³⁰³ Augustine, Confessions. Cited by Matthews (1981) and Cowan (2023).

Part of the worry Augustine has, in answer to his question, is that his *character* is on display in these dreams: that deep down he really does want to break his vows of celibacy. But when character and action align, wherein can the moral luck be located? The only potential exculpatory feature I can think of is, as Augustine thinks, that his waking and dreaming characters are *not* the same because his waking character would not ‘succumb’ to breaking his vows of celibacy. Although, this cannot be said (surely!) of all dreams and dream actions: character *must* align for at least some actions. And so, it seems to come from the agent and those circumstance and constitution forming features are no more out of their control than when they were awake.

If one were to really insist that dream morality looks to be a case of moral luck, they would perhaps be focus on the prospect of passivity – they would suggest that dream morality looks to be an instance of moral luck because the orthodox dream ontology is mistaken. This avenue, within the rhetoric of this chapter, is unfruitful. However, the notion that a different dream ontology, one that takes the ‘activity’ of more popular ontologies and substitutes it with a ‘passivity’, might be right is explored in the penultimate chapter of the thesis. I propose that such an account is implausible, and while discussed in a different context, what I say there is fruitful here.

The penultimate worry that I imagine someone might have is that there is an externalist position not yet featured that manages to avoid both dream morality and moral luck. I imagine this responder conceiving of an externalism that is neither naïve nor systematic. But such a view, for me, is hard to conceive of. I leave this as an avenue for future research. However, I think proposing a new and likely extremely niche form of externalism would be a bizarre response: why would one need to? I have done much to take the sting out of the implausibility thesis throughout! But even if it were the case that one remains very committed to avoiding dream morality, I imagine that the better tactic (or at least the more common tactic) would be to avoid dream morality not through a new moral system but through a new ontology of dreaming. In the next chapter, I argue that this is unsuccessful. I do this after a long discussion on the imagination theory. I also argue that a *sui generis* account of dream action, which I again believe that an externalist seeking to maintain externalism and avoid dream morality might be drawn to, is unsuccessful in avoiding dream morality.

The final worry, which is related to the last, that I anticipate is that by including dream actions in the token type of waking actions we have to reevaluate what actions are the proper object of moral evaluation since many actions no longer seen systematically connected to certain outcomes. Let us return to our golfer one last time: I have said, for cases of dream morality given SAD externalism, that the careless golfer is doing something wrong *even if* he does not hit anyone and the careful golfer is doing something right *even if* he does hit someone. This is because careful golfing systematically leads to

unharmd caddies and careless golfing systematically leads to harmed caddies. But this may not be the case if we include all these dream cases! There are now, it seems, many more cases where careless golfing **does not lead to** some harmed caddie. Can we still correctly say that careless golfing systematically leads to some harm?

I believe the rarity of dream morality is enough to preserve systematism. I ask you to think about how often you actually act wrongly in the dream. I imagine it is rare. In cases of cheating dreams, it would need to be the case that you intended to cheat rather than merely intended to have sex; part of the dream content has to be that you are in a relationship and that you are cheating. And, at least by Driver's lights, dream immorality is problematic even if there is only one actual instance of it. Therefore, admitting that dream morality is rare does little to effect the standard argument. It does, however, help preserve systematism.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have explained two sorts of externalism: Driver's SAD externalism and what I have called naïve externalism. I explained how Driver's SAD externalism is able to avoid moral luck and it is a great benefit to the view that it can do this. However, SAD externalism seems to also lead to dream morality. By Driver's lights, dream morality is something to be avoided and she thinks internalism is a weaker view because it leads to dream morality. I have argued that there is a view that avoids dream morality: naïve externalism. Naïve externalism may be able to avoid dream morality but does lead to instances of problematic moral luck. So, I have offered a suggestion to Driver: embrace dream morality or, more modestly, abandon the standard argument as an effective tool against the internalist. I have argued that dream morality is less problematic than moral luck. I also gave some reasons to think that dream morality is not problematic *at all*. This is explored more richly later. My next chapter, though, covers the imagination theory of dreams and dream morality.

Chapter 7 Does the Imagination Theory Avoid Dream Morality?

In recent years, a popular rival to the orthodox view – also called the received view – of dreaming has emerged. In this chapter, I explain this rival view: the imagination view of dreaming. Different proponents of the view argue for different versions: some proponents argue dream experience involves imagery rather than perceptual experience^{304 305}; others argue dreams involve propositional attitudes: specifically propositional imaginings³⁰⁶; and another posits dreams involve mental imagery and imagined propositional attitudes.³⁰⁷ In this paper, I begin my recalling the standard argument. In the previous chapter, I argued that substituting evaluational internalism for evaluation externalism is not a successful strategy to avoid the conclusion of the standard argument: dream morality. Here, I argue that substituting a different ontology of dreaming, the imagination theory of dreams, for the orthodoxy is unsuccessful in avoiding the dream morality thesis. I argue that imaginative experiences can, and often will, be the proper object of moral evaluation and I aim to improve Smuts' understanding of what it is that makes those imaginings wrong. I apply these arguments to dreaming given the imagination theory and end by considering some objections.

There is an important distinction to make before discussing dreams: it is between “while dreaming” and “in the dream”. Here is an example to illustrate the difference: I have had a dream where I am climbing Mount Everest. It is true that *in the dream* I climb Everest: In the dream, I reach the summit and I feel the cold and I see the surrounding, lower, peaks of other mountains. Under a common understanding of dreams, it is true that in the dream I believe I have summited Mount Everest. In the dream, I might have other mental states: I might desire to be warmer, and so on. However, *while dreaming* I did not climb Everest. While dreaming, I was wrapped up warmly in bed in a flat in Glasgow. As I explain later, it might not follow that even though *in the dream* I felt certain things, or believed certain things, that I believed or felt those things *while dreaming*. In the previous chapter, I explained that for the orthodoxy the distinction between *while dreaming* and *in the dream* often collapses. For instance, if the orthodoxy is true then in the dream, I saw something and formed the belief that I saw something. It is also true that *while dreaming* I had some perceptual experience³⁰⁸ and formed the belief that I saw something. This collapse does not happen given the imagination theory. I expand on this later.

The Standard Argument

³⁰⁴ Recall the previous chapters and their discussion of the orthodoxy. If members of the orthodoxy are correct, then dreams are constituted by perceptual experiences; in Hobson's hotel case he really does claim that he is having a perceptual experience of the hotel.

³⁰⁵ For an example, see McGinn (2004).

³⁰⁶ For an example, see Sosa (2007).

³⁰⁷ For instance, see Ichikawa (2008).

³⁰⁸ Remember, this is a perceptual experience and cannot be described as a perception. This is because it is inaccurate.

Cowan gives the standard argument as four theses. As a reminder:

5. Dream Orthodoxy. Simply, that dreams “are constituted by sensory experiences, beliefs, emotions, intentions, etc. that are of the same psychological type as those formed in waking life.”³⁰⁹
6. Evaluational Internalism. This is the claim that what matters for moral evaluation are those features internal to a person’s agency. For instance, their intentions.
7. Internalist Dream Content: subjects sometimes form, in non-lucid dreams, psychological states or propositional attitudes for which they can be evaluated for, given Internalism.
8. No Special Condition: non-lucid dreamers are at least sometimes in a state that does not render them immune to moral evaluation.

Dream morality follows from these four theses. As we have seen, substituting thesis 2 for evaluational externalism does not lead to a straightforward rejection of the conclusion. In this chapter, I try a different tact by substituting thesis with the imagination theory.

In the previous chapter, I argued that abandoning the internalist thesis (that the proper objects of moral evaluation are those features internal to us such as intentions and desires) for the externalist thesis (that the proper objects of moral evaluation are those features external to us such as the consequences of an action) is unsuccessful. So, one seeking to avoid the dream morality thesis³¹⁰ could offer a different course: argue that a different ontology of dreaming leads to the dream morality thesis being false. If this line of argument is not successful, which I argue it is not, then someone seeking to avoid dream morality will likely have to deny the no special condition thesis.³¹¹

The Imagination Theory

In this first section, I begin by explaining what imagination is. I explain what imagery is and what propositional attitudes are before explaining how different theorists think they manifest in dreams. I also talk about what kinds of experiences the imagination theorist thinks constitute dreams. I discuss what the imagination theorists have said about what happens to waking beliefs while we dream, before explaining the reasons some imagination theorists have given in favour of their view. While there are different versions of the imagination theory, this paper will focus on Ichikawa’s version since his theory discusses both propositional imaginings and mental imagery.

³⁰⁹ Cowan (2021: 4)

³¹⁰ We have already seen that Driver wishes to avoid the dream morality thesis. However, she is not the only one who finds it problematic. proponents of the imagination theory of dreams, namely Ichikawa and Sosa, can both be understood as thinking that dream morality is implausible. If, therefore, it is the case that the imagination theory of dreams leads to dream morality then key proponents of the view might think this is a reason against the imagination theory of dreams.

³¹¹ Other ontologies are discussed elsewhere. For example, a sui generis account is explored when discussing absurdity.

I introduce the imagination theory by contrasting it to the orthodoxy. I do this because an explanation of the orthodoxy is important for the thesis and because I believe that the imagination view is best understood when contrasted to this more popular and intuitive position.

Proponents of the orthodox view of dreaming hold that propositional attitudes held in dreams are of the same kind as those held in waking life. A propositional attitude is an attitude held towards a proposition. They are denoted by verb. Here are some examples where I have underlined the attitudes and put the propositions they are held towards in italics.

1. Descartes believes that *the possibility of dream skepticism is worrisome*.
2. Ichikawa judges that *the imagination theory solves dream skepticism*.
3. Keanu Reeves intends that *he act in future action movies*.
4. I desire that *I could take my lunch break now*.

Nearly everyone believes that while dreaming, we form propositional attitudes.³¹² A key point of contention is over what propositional attitudes are present.

The attitude I have focused on has been belief. The general account offered by members of the orthodoxy is that we have perceptual experiences like we would have had while awake – and I say much more on this later – which leads to us holding propositional attitudes like we would have had if we were awake. For example, when Descartes dreams of being near a fireplace has the perceptual experience of the fire and forms a belief that there is a fire nearby. The imagination theorist offers an alternative account. They say that dreams are imaginary.

Here is a broad definition of imagination:

To imagine is to represent without aiming³¹³ at things as they actually, presently, and subjectively are. One can use imagination to represent possibilities other than the actual, to represent times other than the present, and to represent perspectives other than one's own. Unlike perceiving and believing, imagining something does not require one to consider that something to be the case. Unlike desiring or anticipating, imagining something does not require one to wish or expect that something to be the case.³¹⁴

Proponents of the imagination view make a further distinction. They distinguish between propositional imagination and mental imagery. I first focus on propositional imagining: Propositional imagining is type of propositional attitude. For belief, the attitude is holding that the proposition is true. For imagination, it is entertaining the thought that p. For example, I imagine what it would be like to not

³¹² Daniel Dennett, whose view is discussed in the introduction, is an example of someone who thinks that we do not form attitudes while dreaming.

³¹³ There are cases where this definition is not entirely accurate because there are cases where imagination seems to be able to aim at true. For instance, if a history teacher asks you to imagine what it was like to be a serf, or imagine what a banquet table looked like, then your imagination seems to be aiming at truth.

³¹⁴ See Shen-Yi & Tamar's (2020) SEP article on imagination for this definition and a fuller explanation of it.

have started a PhD.³¹⁵ Where members of the orthodoxy claim that dreamers form and hold a wide variety of propositional attitudes, the imagination theorist says that the main³¹⁶ propositional attitude is that of imagining.³¹⁷

Recall the Everest example. The imagination theorist thinks that cases of collapse would be exceedingly rare. The imagination theorist says that *in the dream* I climb Everest. But they do are not committing to saying that I believe that I climb Everest. Instead, they say I *imagine that* I climb Everest *while dreaming*. This distinction can be further explored by looking at dream skepticism: under the orthodox account, it is the case that you are forming false beliefs. Here, you would be forming the false belief that you are climbing Everest. The imagination theorist does not think you form false beliefs while dreaming. Instead, they say that your dreams are constituted, at least in part, by propositional imaginings. This avoids dream skepticism since false beliefs are not held *while dreaming*.

So far, I have talked about the types of propositional attitudes formed in dreams. Next, I talk about the propositional attitudes retained while dreaming. After this brief discussion, I move onto discussing the other key feature of imagined content in dreams: imagined imagery.

While many imagination theorists think that what we take to be beliefs that *p* in dreams are imaginings that *p*, Sosa also holds that some apparent beliefs in dreams really are beliefs. Sosa's position is that while asleep nearly all our beliefs remain latent. He writes:

Lying in bed until the morning is what one intended through most of the day, even as one thought about other things, as one had dinner, etc. That was still one's intention as one lay down, and there is no reason to suppose that it was lost as one fell asleep. One does not lose one's intentions.³¹⁸

Important here is the distinction between occurrent and dispositional belief. Schwitzgebel writes that “a subject dispositionally believes *p* if a representation with the content *p* is stored in her memory or “belief box””³¹⁹ At this moment you likely have many dispositional beliefs: beliefs about what you plan to do tomorrow morning like grabbing a quick coffee on the way to class, or a belief that Atwood is your favorite author. Sosa says that to bring that belief out of its dispositional state, the person holding it must “judge or assent or avow {the belief}, at least to oneself.”³²⁰ When that happens, the belief becomes occurrent. As Schwitzgebel continues: “when that representation is retrieved from memory for active

³¹⁵ Importantly, doing this does not require that I have any accompanying imagery. I could imagine my life if I had not started a PhD without having any imagery of myself wondering around doing something, anything, else.

³¹⁶ I want to leave it open that the imagination theorist could say there are other propositional attitudes constituting the dream, but that the key distinction between the imagination view and the orthodox view is the prominence of imagination in the ontology *and not necessarily* the exclusion of all other attitudes.

³¹⁷ It is also an open question about whether sensory imagining is a kind of propositional attitude. I leave that question to the wayside for now, but readers are invited to think about it throughout.

³¹⁸ Sosa (2005: 8-9)

³¹⁹ The term “belief box” is from Schwitzgebel's SEP article “Belief”, (2019).

³²⁰ Sosa (2005: 8)

deployment in reasoning or planning, the subject occurrently believes *p*.”³²¹ Sosa believes the same is true of intentions. Sosa’s position is that when we dream our waking beliefs and intentions become dispositional, and that this is not unusual. Beliefs like who your favourite author is are a good example of dispositional beliefs. It seems unlikely that you are constantly affirming who your favourite author is, either out loud or consciously. However, it does not seem as though we lose that belief whenever we stop consciously affirming it. It merely remains unaffirmed until we next think about it. Sosa’s imagination theory says that our waking beliefs and intentions simply become latent, and not lost, while we dream.

Sosa’s position is that *while dreaming* many of our waking mental states, including propositional attitudes, remain dispositional. However, it seems less likely that our waking propositional attitudes are dispositional *in the dream*. For instance, it is unclear to me I hold any dispositional beliefs about what I wish to do when I wake up in the dream I have where I climb Everest. For example, Sosa believes I have dispositional beliefs about my morning routine (getting up, taking the dog out, making coffee, etc) but it does not seem as though I still have those plans when climbing Everest! In part, it seems that I do not believe I still have to wake up when climbing Everest and so holding beliefs about what I must do after that seems nonsensical. However, there is some evidence to think that dispositional attitudes held while dreaming can affect what happens in the dream. I discuss this fully in a future section, for now I want to introduce a common example: let us say that I am stressed because I believe I have underprepared for an upcoming presentation. When I fall asleep, that belief becomes dispositional while I dream. However, in the dream, I dream that all my teeth fall out. This is a common stress dream. In such cases, it seems that the dispositional attitudes held while dreaming can inform the dream narrative.

This has been a discussion on propositional imaginings. The other type of imagining argued to be present in dreams is imagined mental imagery. Again, I begin by discussing the orthodox, so the imagination view is brought clearly into focus through contrast.

The first contrast is that rather than dreams involving misleading perceptual experiences they involve perceptual imagery. Ichikawa writes that when he dreams about a grey kitten with green eyes, he is not having a visual experience of colour, but instead experiencing colour imagery. He continues that it is “the same sort of sensory-like experience I have when I close my eyes and imagine what a gray kitten looks like.”³²² Therefore, rather than dreams involving misleading perceptual experiences they are made up of imaginative experiences. While, like the literature on perception, the focus has been on visual imagery it is important to remember that there are many other kinds of imagery. For instance, I discuss briefly auditory imagery later.

³²¹ Schwitzgebel (2019)

³²² Ichikawa (2009: 107)

The difference between hallucination and imagination is one that has come under some scrutiny. To distinguish imaginative mental imagery from hallucinatory mental imagery, Ichikawa has pointed to a specific property he thinks imaginative experiences have that hallucinatory experiences do not: that they are subject to the will. I now analyze the reason for this claim, and what this claim means.

There has been some debate over whether the distinction between imagery and hallucination is a useful one. David Sosa writes that imagination and perceptual experience are ‘deeply alike; their differences, such as they may be, are inessential to their basic character.’³²³ Sosa continues that the difference between imaginative experience and hallucinatory experience is akin to the difference between reading words written in pencil and words written in pen³²⁴. This analogy is metaphorical and perhaps unclear, but I understand Sosa as saying that the differences between the two are subtle, and that they are fundamentally the same ‘kind’ of experience. Some philosophers go even further: Dominic ffytche, Richard Bentall and Filippo Varese, and Charles Fernyhough and Simon McCarthy-Jones³²⁵ all discuss the possibility that hallucinations are comprised of imaginative experiences. There have been philosophers who distinguish between the two experiences. Many have argued that the two experiences have a different phenomenological character. Hume is an example of someone who thinks this as he writes that mental imagery is less vivid than perceptual experience. Perceptual experiences are often thought to be sensitive to the environment: for most perceptual experiences we have we expect to see some real-world object that we are standing in the right relation to. For the perceptual experiences that constitute hallucination, we often expect the person hallucinating to be either ill or drugged or under the influence of something that leads them to hallucinate. This is not a necessary condition of hallucination, but I think the idea that hallucinations often seem caused by other, external-to-the-mind, stimulus is popular. This is contrary to cases of mental imagery, where we expect no such influence, and we often think of imagination as having mostly internal origins. Some imagination theorists, namely Ichikawa, have tried to defend the claim that imaginative experiences are sufficiently distinct to belong in a different category from hallucinatory experiences because they are subject to the will.³²⁶

Here is an example: a young student is caught absent mindedly daydreaming.³²⁷ The teacher tells them to stop daydreaming. This is not understood as some impossible command, and it seems as though the student is able to stop imagining something and refocus on their schoolwork. Another case occurs in many first-year philosophy classrooms: when students deal with the trolley problem, they are often asked

³²³ Sosa (2006: 315) as cited by Ichikawa (2009:106).

³²⁴ This claim is plausibly Humean in nature. Hume thought that the two experiences differed in vividness. See Hume (1740) for more.

³²⁵ For a proper exegesis of these views, see Macpherson (2013).

³²⁶ Not all mental imagery seems subject to the will. Ichikawa himself brings up the example of someone who cannot banish the face of a fallen friend. There are cases of flashbacks or trauma related mental imagery. But Ichikawa says that these still belong to a category of things that are subject to the will; even if we fail to banish the image of a fallen friend, we know what it is like to banish that image and we know what it is like to try to banish that image. He sees these not as cases where they are not subject to will but cases where they subject to the will, but we fail to fully exercise our will over them.

³²⁷ For this purpose, I am assuming that daydreaming is a kind of imagination.

to imagine five people tied to one track, and one person tied to another. They are asked to imagine a train barreling towards a railway gate switch which they control. The students being asked to imagine such an event is not absurd.³²⁸ Such cases point to an intuitive obviousness: we often ask people to stop imagining something, and there doesn't seem to be anything peculiar about that. In fact, we often seem able to stop imagining. Ichikawa even discusses cases where we are asked to banish an imaginative experience but fail to.³²⁹ He writes: "even when our imagery is unwelcome and we cannot banish it, we try to banish it; we know what it is to banish it." Let us contrast this with a different student who is distracted by a ruckus outside. It would be a confused command if the teacher said, "stop hearing that noise outside."³³⁰ It would also be a confused command if the teacher then asked them to have the visual experience of red square.³³¹ Therefore, we have a marked difference between the properties of the two experiences.³³²

Ichikawa continues this by saying that lucid dreams seem under our control, and this is good reason to think non-lucid dreams are subject to the will. Lucid dreams are dreams in which the dreamer is aware that they are dreaming and can take active control over their dream. Ichikawa writes that the imagination model fits the experience {of lucid dreaming} well.³³³ The idea is that as one can shape how they interact with their imagination and command their imagination; they are also able to do that in lucid dreams. Ichikawa continues: "in non-lucid dreaming, dreamers create their dreams without recognizing their own agency. In lucid dreams, dreamers recognize they are in control..."³³⁴ I understand Ichikawa as saying something like 'dreams are always under our control, but we do not always recognize they are. It is because of this lack of recognition that we do not control all our dreams, but dreams are the "kind" of thing that we have agency over.'³³⁵ A key component of Ichikawa's argument relies on the assumption that lucid dreams are of the same kind as non-lucid dreams. The onus, though, would be on someone who disagrees to explain why they are of different kinds.³³⁶

A non-trivial note is that Ichikawa believes that saying that dreams are bidden and using that to explain lucid dreams gives his view an advantage over the orthodoxy. This is another compelling reason to favour this distinction between hallucination and imagination: it is directly relevant to how these views

³²⁸ Aphantasics, those who cannot imagine, might think this is absurd. But for the majority of people, these are reasonable demands that can be made of them.

³²⁹ Ichikawa (2009: 107)

³³⁰ One might think that it is possible to banish a noise by throwing ones hands over their ears. This seems to me a different sort of prevention: in the case where one is asked to banish an imaginative experience, one makes a conscious effort (and not a physical one) to remove an experience from one's head. This seems different from taking the physical steps to avoid seeing or hearing something.

³³¹ Ichikawa (2009: 107)

³³² Windt says, "The obvious problem is that if control indeed characterizes imagination, the dreams obviously fall short." However, for my purposes I am happy to grant this difference.

³³³ Ichikawa (2009: 116-117)

³³⁴ Ichikawa (2009: 116)

³³⁵ Ichikawa (2009: 116)

³³⁶ One reason, perhaps ironically, to think they are of different kinds is because we have agency in one and not the other. That is, Ichikawa may be begging the question. I set this aside for now and am happy to grant Ichikawa's claims.

explain different components of dreams. Finally, there is the persistent of idea of people as authors or creators of their dreams.

The imagination theorist has to say *something* to ward off this criticism that imagination and hallucination are of the same kind if they want to remain an imagination theorist.³³⁷ Other accounts of the difference are weaker.

For instance, a common argument for dreams being imaginative is that they are indeterminate: while dreams often appear to the dreamer while dreaming as rich and vivid, upon recollection we realise those dreams lacked background details³³⁸; or that we recognized people in the dream only by us knowing who they were not because we had an experience of identifiable features³³⁹; or that dreams are generally vague³⁴⁰; or even that dreams may be monochromatic³⁴¹ which Ichikawa argues is the case for all imagined objects and that we transpose colour on after the imagination. This would be a marked difference from commonplace perceiving, but it is unclear that it leads to a marked difference between imagination and hallucination. It is a marked difference from commonplace perceiving because it we do see in colour, but it is unclear that we hallucinate in colour.

One could commit to a view in philosophy of mind and use that view to draw the dividing lines. For instance, one could be a functionalist. It could be the case that under functionalism, which holds that a mental state is defined by its inputs and outputs, that imagination and hallucination have different outputs and inputs. As such, they would be different mental states. For example, the functionalist would pain's input as some bodily injury and the outputs are the belief that you are hurt; or a desire to not be in the state anymore; anxiety and perhaps moaning in pain. I think there is an ontological worry here: one is now committing to large views in philosophy of mind to preserve an imagination theory. This is ad hoc, at least within the context of this paper. Secondly, I think a functionalist account of mental states would entail that the orthodox view of dreaming is more likely. As such, committing to this view as a member of the imagination theory both adds bloat and makes their position less convincing.

I do not believe the debate is settled, or that I have settled it. Instead, I have argued that the best reasons as they are presented in the popular literature – without committing one to an all-encompassing theory of mind³⁴² – is to say that the distinguishing feature between imagination and hallucination is that imagination is in some way bidden.

³³⁷ A view popularised by Windt is that this initial distinction pitting a theory of dreams as imaginative versus a theory of dreams as hallucinatory is confused. While one could adopt this view, I am assuming that the imagination theorist wants to defend their view as distinct.

³³⁸ See Thompson (2014).

³³⁹ See Kahn et al. (2000), (2002) and Revonsuo & Tarkko (2002).

³⁴⁰ See Hobson (1988).

³⁴¹ See Schwitzgebel (2002), (2003).

³⁴² While outside the scope of the paper, it is unclear that appealing to functionalism would aid a proponent of the imagination view since the outputs of waking imagination and dreaming seem different; agents trash about fearfully in bed while experiencing a nightmare in a way that someone imagining something scary does not. This line is engaged with more when I discuss i-states.

Ichikawa talks as though both propositional imagination and imagined imagery are under our control. It is theoretically possible that someone holds that one is bidden, and the other not. But I see no reason to think this is true: in waking cases, both seem bidden. In dream cases, they both seem unbidden. This is an obvious and intuitive worry: dreams really do not seem like imaginations as Ichikawa describes them, but one being set aside for now.

Thus far I have explained the imagination theory of dreams. I have discussed propositional imagination and imagined imagery. I have explained these and contrasted the imagination theory with the Orthodox theory of dreams. I will not critically assess whether the imagination theory is true or not. For my thesis, I currently assume the truth of the imagination theory to evaluate if dream morality is possible if the imagination theory is right. I now quickly discuss some reasons that the imagination theorist gives to motivate their view.

The first argument I examine is that dreams do not wake us up. McGinn and Ichikawa³⁴³ both write that the expectation would be that if dreams were constituted by the same sort of auditory experiences, one would have if one were awake, then one would expect that dreams would constantly be waking dreamers up. Here is an example: someone can dream that there is a large garbage truck outside their window, and one would not expect them to awaken. However, when a real garbage truck rolls by their real window the dreamer is jolted awake by the grumbling machine. The explanation, the imagination theorist says, is simple. Rather than dreams involving auditory experiences like those we have when we are awake, dreams involve imagined auditory experiences like those we have when we imagine a sound. This an argument that posits that the qualities that dreams have are better explained given the imagination view. There are other examples of such qualities, although they are often called into question. I have already mentioned indeterminacy.

There has been some recent scientific literature that supports the imagination theory of dreams. Again, it is an argument that the current evidence supports an imagination theory compared to competing views. As children develop the ability to imagine, they develop the ability to dream. Similarly, as children can imagine more sophisticatedly, their dreams become more sophisticated.³⁴⁴ Foulkes writes:

To dream, it isn't enough to be able to see. You have to be able to think in a certain way. Specifically, you have to be able, in your mind's eye, to simulate, at the first momentarily and later in more extended episodes, a conscious reality that it is not supported by the current sense data and that you've never even experience before.³⁴⁵

³⁴³ This argument is found both in McGinn (2004) and Ichikawa (2009).

³⁴⁴ Foulkes has done two studies on this. One in 1993 and the other in 1999.

³⁴⁵ Foulkes (1999: 117)

Ichikawa cites the same work by Foulkes and says that while this is far from conclusive it does seem that this data is better explained by the imagination theory than by other views. There has been literature written on what brain damage can do to dreaming. The ability to visually imagine is an ability one can lose if parts of their brain are damaged. The occipito-temporo-parietal junction is the part of the brain responsible for abstract visual reasoning. Damaging this part of the brain leads to an inability to imagine visually, and it results in an inability to dream.^{346 347 348} Again, this is understood as evidence that parts of the brain responsible for imagining are also responsible for dreaming. The imagination theorists I am discussing make an argument from the best explanation and say that this gives us evidence to think dreams are imaginative.

The dream continuity hypothesis is also consistent with the imagination theory of dreams. The dream continuity hypothesis is that waking concerns and goals impact, in some way, dreams. Simply, the hypothesis is that dreams are continuous with waking life. A common example might be one of anxiety: I often find that when I am anxious about some upcoming deadline or event that I have anxiety dreams. While those dreams may not be about the upcoming deadline or event, that concern – manifest perhaps as the anxiety I felt in waking life – is reflected in the dream. The dream continuity hypothesis is widely accepted, and the contemporary discussion is not about whether the hypothesis is true but about what features of waking life are continuous, and to what extent.³⁴⁹ The imagination theorist says other games of imagination and daydreaming are reflective of waking content, which is no surprise since they are also waking states. If your thesis could not accommodate the dream continuity hypothesis, that would be a startling problem. Thankfully, the dream continuity hypothesis is something the imagination theorist can make sense of.

There are two things to note: I have only discussed three arguments that imagination theorists give. They give more. Ichikawa alone, for example, gives four arguments in his 2009 paper. Imagination theorists have also defended their view against some criticisms. Again, using Ichikawa as an example, the imagination theorist has often defended their view against the claim that dreams do not seem subject to the will at all. The second point worth noting is that the orthodoxy and the imagination theory might not be mutually exclusive. I have used the views as a way of contrasting the claims people make about dreams, but a pluralism about dreams is possible. Another possibility is that hallucinations *are* imagination. This is pushed aside in my thesis in order to maintain that rhetorical edge: I am content with

³⁴⁶ Solms & Turnbull's (2002) paper is cited often for this.

³⁴⁷ Ichikawa cites the same evidence. See Whitely (2021) for more detail and how this could relate to Ichikawa's position.

³⁴⁸ This study is likely incomplete since people with Aphantasia can still dream. Again, see Whitely (2021).

³⁴⁹ For these discussions, see Domhoff (2001), (2003); Schredl & Hofmann (2003); Schredl (2006); see also Nir & Tononi (2010).

these being distinct views if only because it highlights the plausibility of dream morality *regardless* of ontology.

There are two other sorts of imagination that it is important to discuss. The first discussion is on i-states. I-states are best understood through contrast. Here is an interpretation of the imagination theory as I have discussed it so far:

Modest: non-lucid dreams are constituted by imagery and propositional imaginings that are the same psychological type as those formed in waking life.³⁵⁰

Let's contrast this with another view that Cowan calls a robust version of the imagination theory:

Robust: non-lucid dreams are constituted by imagery, propositional imaginings and the imaginative analogues of desires, emotions, intentions, conscious and willings, etc. that are of the same psychological type formed in waking life.³⁵¹

This robust theory is positing that alongside the two other sorts of imagination I have discussed, dreams are constituted by a third sort of imagination. Rather than fearing, you have some imaginative analogue for fear. We can call this an i-fear, and it is an example of an i-state. They are different from propositional imagining. I-fear stands to fear as imagining that *p* stands to believing that *p*. Kendall Walton defends a specific theory of i-states called quasi-emotions which I discuss later. The principal difference between i-states and states is that they have a different functional profile: I act differently when I experience i-fear than when I experience fear. I will say more, but it is important to introduce these concepts now, and I encourage readers to keep it in mind.

I also wish to quickly introduce fantasy. Fantasy is importantly different from imagination. While a fuller discussion follows, it is worth noting that fantasy is most commonly defined as having some pleasurable response to some imagined content. It is worth thinking about both fantasy and i-states as we go through the next sections.

This section has introduced and explained the imagination theory of dreams. It has talked about its key features: it has discussed attitudes, experiences and will. I ended by quickly explaining some reasons given in favor of the view by its key proponents. It has also discussed some other kinds of imagination. For the next section of my paper, I grant the imagination theory is true. I now ask: "if the imagination theory is true, is dream morality possible?"

The New Standard Argument

³⁵⁰ Cowan (2021: 24)

³⁵¹ Cowan (2021, 24)

The rest of the chapter's aim to explain whether the imagination theory still leads to dream morality if we substitute the imagination theory into the standard argument in place the orthodoxy. I argue that this substitution does not avoid the dream morality conclusion. Here is what the 'new' standard argument looks like:

1. Imagination Theory of Dreams: non-lucid dreams are constituted by imagery and/or propositional imagination.
2. Evaluational Internalism: the moral quality of person's agency, what they do, is fully determined by factors that are internal to that agency.³⁵²
3. Internalist Dream Content: sometimes, in non-lucid dreams, subjects form psychological states that would be relevant to versions of internalism.³⁵³
4. No Special Condition: non-lucid dreamers are not always in a special condition that renders them immune to moral evaluation.³⁵⁴

From these four theses, I argue that sometimes, even rarely, what we do in non-lucid dreams can be the proper object of moral evaluation. It is worth noting "what we do in non-lucid dreams" has been understood a couple of ways: sometimes, it looks as though dreamers attempt to act but fail and in others it appears what someone does that is morally important is forming an intention. Here, what one is doing is *imagining* the dream content. The question is whether this imagining is ever the proper object of moral evaluation.

I now go on to examine three different accounts that all conclude that imagination can be the proper object of moral evaluation. I argue that account one is powerfully unintuitive; that account two solves that problem by being more intuitive but fails to capture some cases that really do look wrong; and finally, I offer my own account that I believe solves both the unintuitive issue while capturing problem cases. For all these accounts, I am assuming internalism is true.

Is Imagination, by Itself, Ever the Proper Object of Moral Evaluation?

Before going into these three accounts, it is important to raise a distinction between imagination and fantasy. Someone is having a fantasy when they imagine X (either propositionally or as imagery) and have some pleasurable response to X. The focus in the literature has been to ignore *mere* imagination and instead focus on fantasy. I want to briefly explain why I think this is.

Let's begin with a common case that is used by Smuts: a wife is imagining having sex her personal trainer without the consent of her husband.³⁵⁵ Since this is not a fantasy, she does not find the

³⁵² Cowan (2021: 2). Also see Driver (2007: 5)

³⁵³ Cowan 2021: 3)

³⁵⁴ Cowan (2021: 5)

³⁵⁵ Smuts (2015: 8)

imagination pleasurable but nor does she find it repulsive. In this case, has the wife done anything wrong? The intuitive answer appears to be no. To say that she has looks puritanical. There are cases where imagining something that might look horrid, such as torturing a child, might be good. If a detective, in his pursuit of some serial killer who harms children, finds it useful to imagine what the killer does then there does not seem to be anything wrong with such an imagination.³⁵⁶

However, some might persist that it does look wrong. I believe most of those persist are making a similar mistake to what Driver thinks those who endorse dream morality are making. Driver believes that dreams might have an epistemic function, or at least sometimes have an epistemic function, that she calls the “character intuition.”³⁵⁷ Her idea is that while what one does in dreams might be not wrong, what one does in dreams might inform us about their character. Driver thinks some might mistake the character intuition for someone doing wrong in their dreams. The same is happening here: those who think imagination itself is the proper object of moral evaluation seem to think that someone imagining some X tells us something about their character. For instance, in the wife case, some unfairly draw the inference that the wife is open to having an affair with her hot trainer. Or that she has some desire, or some belief, or some intention that is problematic. But drawing such an inference is not fair, and regardless the proper object of moral evaluation would be those problematic internal states instead of the imaginative experience!

There is a worry wrought from asymmetry which I think gives evidence for the character intuition. When someone imagines some extremely positive thing, we more obviously think this reflects their character. While we might say that someone has done something *wrong* by imagining hurting someone it seems implausible to me that we would say someone has done something right by imagining giving someone a gift. However, this might still reflect on their character; someone who imagines giving people gifts in their spare time might be considered kind and perhaps a bit odd.

And so, no one seems to take seriously the idea that imagination can, by itself, be morally right or wrong. Instead, people have focused on discussing fantasy. Let us tweak the case: let us say that the wife who imagines having hot sex with her personal trainer *really enjoys* the imagination. This looks less likely to be unproblematic. In the next sections, I discuss fantasy specifically rather than just imagination.

The IRL Theory

³⁵⁶ There are caveats that I discuss later.

³⁵⁷ Driver (2007: 8)

The natural course of analysis here is to begin by seeing if imagination is ever wrong in waking life.³⁵⁸ The first theory, and I believe the poorest theory, is the in real life theory (now IRL theory).

Smuts, who is not a proponent of the view, explains it as:

It is wrong to fantasize about doing something that would be wrong to do *in real life*.

Alternatively stated in terms of badness: it is morally bad to pleasurablely imagine states of affairs that would be bad to respond to pleasurablely in real life.³⁵⁹

Smuts, as we have seen, gives the example of a wife who fantasizes about having sex with her personal trainer without the consent of her husband. A proponent of the IRL theory would say that what the wife is doing is wrong *because* it would be wrong for her to actualize her fantasy; it would be wrong for her to sleep with her personal trainer and therefore it is wrong to fantasize about sleeping with her personal trainer. To help distinguish this view from others, it is helpful to explain that proponents of the IRL theory would say that it is wrong to have a specific fantasy *if it would be wrong of you to get up and do it now*. Smuts dismisses this view out of hand for being too ‘puritanical’. I now explore this charge more thoroughly.

I understand the puritanical objection as saying that the conclusion is sex negative and too restrictive. The conclusions brought about by the IRL do not seem sex negative³⁶⁰ since it is perfectly fine to imagine, and enjoy those imaginings, of all kinds of consensual sex acts. I now give a defence of the IRL, before arguing against it.

Let’s examine an example: Alex confides in their partner that he often fantasies about having sex with his tennis coach to his significant other. He confesses that he would never cheat on his significant other, but none the less has these fantasies. Under the IRL-Theory, Alex is doing something wrong. He is imagining having sex with someone who is not his significant other when he and his significant other have agreed to a monogamous relationship. If his significant other said “Alex, you’ve hurt my feelings by having this fantasy” and “Alex, you really should not be fantasising about that” would we chastise her for being unreasonable? I think the answer is no, and that her view is consistent with internalism: it seems plausible that she understands that Alex’s fantasies are unrelated to his ever trying to cheat, or that his fantasies do not lead to a less fulfilling relationship. Nonetheless, it seems that Alex might be doing something wrong and that his partner is not irrationally puritanical to be hurt by this. My point is not that Smuts is wrong, but that he might be relying on a commonplace intuition that I doubt is shared.

³⁵⁸ I have assumed that some fantasy is morally problematic. I imagine some might resist this. One reason to think that fantasy is problematic is because it involves imagining that the world be a certain way and then responding that with pleasure would be inappropriate if the world was that way. Moore offers an intuition-based account instead: he asks us to imagine worlds A and B. In world A, there is no one. In world B, there is one person, and they spend all their time fantasising about harming children. He asks us which world we prefer. The answer, he thinks, is obviously B. I take it as intuitive that some fantasy is wrong in this chapter, but I think Moore’s case helps push that intuition.

³⁵⁹ Smuts (2015: 8)

³⁶⁰ Someone who is sex negative is someone who thinks sex is dirty, or dangerous, or deviant, or in some way shameful. People who are puritanical are sex negative.

While it seems wrong to say that Alex's partner is wrong to be hurt, it might be that Alex's partner still has not done anything wrong. There are plenty of things that one can do that hurt their partner but are not, by themselves, wrong. My partner might think the food I enjoy is unpalatable or that the movies I like are boring. Neither of these judgements look morally wrong. Similarly, I would be hurt if my current partner broke up with me. But again, this does not seem something *morally* wrong. We can grant that Alex's partner has every right to be hurt while still claiming that the fantasy is not wrong. There are cases where fantasising about your trainer is wrong to do and obviously so, but those cases seem to rest on something other than the fantasy; for instance, if your partner has made your promise not to fantasise about this sort of thing.

So, it seems that Smuts' charge does stick after all. The view is too restrictive; it marks too many fantasies as wrong. Even if it can capture some intuitions, it is likely not enough to justify the IRL theory. This restrictiveness is part of the key issue with the IRL theory: the IRL theory does not capture the right intuitions on a myriad of problem cases, and this is true for more than just puritanical cases.

There are lots of cases that the IRL theory mistakes as wrong that are more beyond sex cases. Let's say that you fantasize about living in New Zealand. Let's say a father to young children imagines, pleasurably, living in the rolling hobbit hills in isolation. However, if that father were to get up right now and move to New Zealand, he would likely be doing something wrong! He would be leaving his children and his partner. He would be abandoning his job, his friends, and his family. But the fantasy itself, of living in faraway country in isolation, does not seem wrong. This point can be taken more broadly: there are fantasies whose content does not consider reality and that helps render them morally innocuous. If abandoning their wife and children was a key component to the fantasy, then it is more obviously wrong. However, an innocuous fantasy about being somewhere does not seem inappropriate. So, it is not the case that the IRL Theory is wrong *merely* because it is puritanical. Puritanical cases are one instance where the view incorrectly leads to too many fantasies being wrong. Our next theory, the Moorean theory, does a better job at capturing intuitions.

The Moorean Theory

Smuts gives the Moorean-Theory as:

A more plausible theory holds that it is wrong (or morally bad) to fantasize about doing something that is bad *in itself*³⁶¹ ... It is not intrinsically bad to have hot sex with one's personal trainer.³⁶²

In this section, I explain the Moorean theory. The Moorean theory is able to deal with criticisms that the IRL theory fails to deal with, but also has several objections to it. I discuss three objections. I argue that the first two objections (the Moorean theory fails to capture important differences between autonomous and surrogate fantasies & the Moorean theory is not focused on imagined content) fail but argue that the third objection, that an ethics of imagination should have a broader scope beyond pleasurable responding to imaginative content, is successful.

First, I explain the theory. Recall the trainer example from earlier. The Moorean-Theory says that the wife has done nothing wrong because there is nothing wrong with simply having sex with one's personal trainer. When we look at the wrong making features of this action in real life, we find that these are not present in the fantasy: it would be wrong for the wife to break her promise to her husband because it is bad to break one's promise. In the fantasy she does not imagine herself as married, and her breaking the promise to her husband is not a feature of the fantasy³⁶³. Smuts contrasts the wife's fantasy with a more sinister fantasy of someone who imagines harming children. In the latter, the content of the fantasy is itself bad. The content of having sex with a personal trainer is not. This captures intuitions better when we change the wife's cheating fantasy:

- A. In fantasy A, she imagines having sex with her personal trainer. It is not imagined as an act of cheating.
- B. In fantasy B, she imagines sneaking around her husband's back to make him an unwitting cuckold. She imagines having sex with her personal trainer and she imagines that in that fantasy she is a married woman.

The IRL theory reports that fantasy A is wrong, and that fantasy B is wrong. In both situations, one is having a fantasy about doing something that would be immoral: they are having a fantasy about cheating on their partner. The Moorean Theory reports that fantasy A is *not* immoral because there is nothing bad in itself about having sex with your trainer. Another way of thinking about this is that the IRL theory takes into account what your real-world situation is. Here, your real-world situation is that you are married in a monogamous relationship. The Moorean theory does not, and instead focuses on the world

³⁶¹ It is worth noting the similarity in language used by Moore and the language used by Michael Slote.

³⁶² Smuts (2015: 8)

³⁶³ I asked my partner about this – she seems to think that these kinds of imaginings are still wrong. I think it is because she thinks of a part of a relationship as promising not to think about others this way. I do not think this poses a problem for Smuts. Rather than dismiss my girlfriend for being too puritanical, he could say that this imagining is wrong for reasons outside the fantasy; that merely fantasizing it involves breaking a promise that is not necessary to being in a relationship. The wife's fantasy looks far less dubious if her husband gives her the go-ahead.

contained *within* the fantasy. For the Moorean theory, the bad in itself features are that one breaks a promise; that one has an affair rather than merely having sex with someone; and so on.

The Moorean Theory can deal with both criticisms brought up against the IRL Theory. The first criticism was that the IRL Theory is too puritanical. The Moorean Theory is not: as we have seen it is more restrictive in what labels as morally problematic. The problem case that Smuts brought forward was that of someone fantasizing about having sex with a personal trainer. Smuts thinks condemning this fantasist is highly unintuitive. If those are the intuitions we wish to accommodate, then the Moorean Theory fares far better. It does not condemn the fantasist in the problem case, but it does condemn the fantasist if the features of the fantasy are different. We see this in our analysis of fantasy A and fantasy B. Therefore, the Moorean Theory avoids the charge of being “too puritanical”.

The Moorean theory is not as liberal as the IRL theory when it comes to calling fantasies wrong. In the previous section, I used the example of a New Zealand getaway. The New Zealand fantasy – as described before – is not morally problematic under the Moorean theory. It is not problematic because the content of the fantasy is not itself bad: there is nothing bad about desiring to live in a cottage in New Zealand. However, if the content of that fantasy is slightly different then someone who thought the Moorean account was correct could find the fantasy morally problematic: imagine if part of the fantasy of disappearing to New Zealand involved enjoying the idea of his family lost and confused without him; he imagines his colleagues and family struggling without him. This is thrilling to the fantasist. Harming people for the thrill looks bad *in itself*. So, the Moorean theory labels this second fantasy morally problematic and the first morally permissible. Therefore, the Moorean theory can combat both objections I brought up against the IRL theory.

A problem one could raise with the Moorean theory is that it does not distinguish between autonomous and surrogate fantasies. I argue that while autonomous and surrogate fantasies are morally different, neither is morally innocuous. Christopher Cherry divides fantasies into two kinds: autonomous and surrogate. Autonomous fantasies are those fantasies that the person having the fantasy does not want to be actualized. These fantasies are common. An example is fantasizing about being the victim of a sexual assault. Bivona and Critelli found that 62% of women have had this fantasy, and 14% of those reporting having had this fantasy have it at least weekly.³⁶⁴ None of these women want this fantasy to come true. This makes it an example of autonomous fantasy. Surrogate fantasies are those fantasies that one wants to take place. As Smuts writes: “They are surrogates for reality.”³⁶⁵ These fantasies are commonplace: think of all the times you have imagined that it was 30 minutes later so that you could justify taking a break from work or wishing that you were no longer on a diet so you could eat a whole

³⁶⁴ See Bivona & Critelli (2009)

³⁶⁵ Smuts (2015: 9)

pie in a single sitting, or happily imagined that you had won the lottery. Smuts writes that “Autonomous fantasies appear to be far less morally problematic; perhaps they are morally innocuous.” Smuts does not defend this view and seems to take it as intuitively true. Here is an account someone could give if they did not want to rely on intuition:

- a. In fantasy A, someone imagines cheating on their partner. The cheating is part of the fantasy. They enjoy this: it is a fantasy they have. It is, however, an autonomous fantasy. They do not *actually* wish to cheat on their partner.
- b. In fantasy B, someone cheats on their partner. They enjoy this: it is a fantasy they have. It is also a surrogate fantasy: they really do what to cheat on their partner!

The difference between fantasy A and fantasy B is some additional wrongdoing *and not* something that might remove wrongdoing: Fantasy B is a surrogate fantasy that is wrong for two reasons: it is wrong because it is something that the fantasist wants to happen, *and* it is wrong because it is bad to cheat on their partner. Fantasy A, according to the Moorean theory, is wrong because the fantasy itself is bad. It is true that there is no desire to cheat on one’s partner, and that desire is morally relevant, but it is unclear to me how having one morally permissible feature means the rest of the content and response is morally permissible. It is clear to me, then, that appealing to the distinction alone is not enough. A critic might continue that there are some autonomous fantasies that the Moorean theory gets wrong, rather than thinking *all* autonomous fantasies are morally innocuous.

Here is an example the critic might appeal to: let us say that someone fantasizes themselves fighting off a horde of villains. Smuts talks briefly about Tarantino’s *Kill Bill* where the protagonist carves through the Crazy-88. Such fantasies are most commonly autonomous: I do not *really* want to have a prolonged sword fight to the death, but I enjoy imagining myself doing it. This fantasy looks innocent enough. However, it is bad in itself to murder many people, and the Moorean theory, the critic says, would incorrectly have this fantasy as a bad one. I believe this is a confusion about the content of the fantasy: when I imagine myself carving through swordsmen, I do not envision myself as a murderer. I do not imagine that those attacked by me to be people.³⁶⁶ I see them as tokens to show off my skill as a cool guy fighter. The content of the fantasy does not have me as rampaging killer. Let us contrast this with a fantasy where, before dealing the deathblow to each adversary, I imagine them as full people: I take time to think about what their families must be like; their joys; their desires and so on. Rather than being “something to cut through so I look cool” they are real people, and I imagine myself killing them! This second fantasy has content that looks, to me, bad. It is bad because these people-shaped-swordsmen have been turned into people. The content of these fantasies seems different. Therefore, it is the case that

³⁶⁶ Someone might say that these people are imagined as baddies and so deserve death so there is no wrongdoing in the fantasy. I would argue that even if you do not imagine them as baddies, if the properties of the people are indeterminant, the fantasy still does not look problematic.

Moorean theorist can correctly label the innocuous one as innocuous and the problematic one as problematic.

These examples show that appealing to the difference between autonomous and surrogate fantasies is not enough to prove the Moorean theory wrong. The next criticism is that the Moorean theorists should more appropriately be labeled as a theory of the ethics of emotion.

Someone might believe that the reason that the Moorean theory seems plausible is that we are considering cases where someone enjoys the bad. They explain that it is the enjoyment that is problematic, and not the content; the imagined content does not look as though it is evaluated, and that it is merely the response that is evaluated. The Moorean theory, therefore, is not a theory about fantasy and just a theory about emotion.

This criticism is a poor one. It seems dubious to claim that any emotion, by itself, is evaluable. It would, for instance, be odd to think that joy or disgust or apathy was *never* morally appropriate. Equally, it would be exceptionally odd to think that joy or disgust or apathy was *always* morally permissible. Similarly, the Moorean theory says that no imaginative event is, by itself, morally evaluable. However, when we combine two features that would not be, by themselves, morally evaluable then we have something that is morally evaluable: when joy is in conjunction with some horrific imagination, then that person imagining and feeling joy is morally scrutinized.

The third criticism, which I argue is successful, is that when discussing the ethics of imagination many cases that look to be of moral interest do not involve enjoying the fantasy. Instead, we should talk about the appropriateness of some emotion held to some content. Here is an example: someone is imagining a gay couple getting married. Their response to this imagination is anger. This is morally wrong of them. The morally appropriate response to imagining a gay couple being married ranges from apathy to joy but disgust is wholly inappropriate. So, there are cases where more than just pleasure is morally interesting. Similarly, there are also problem cases that are rendered *not* problematic if they emotional response to them is different. Take the cheating case again, but instead let us say that the person imagining that they are cheating is disgusted by the idea.

My New Moorean Argument

The last theory I give is my own. It is an altered version of the Moorean argument that deals with all previous criticisms. As a reminder, the Moorean theory is: “it is wrong (or morally bad) to fantasize about doing something that is bad *in itself*.”³⁶⁷ I expand this to:

It is wrong (or morally bad) to have an inappropriate³⁶⁸ response to specific imagined content.

This includes someone enjoying imagined content that is bad *in itself* but is not limited to that eg; it is inappropriate, and therefore wrong (or morally bad), to feel disgust towards some imagined content that is good *in itself*.

This view avoids all previous criticisms. It is not too permissive or too restrictive. It captures problem cases well and still avoids the pitfalls on the IRL theory by taking the Moorean line. It avoids the one successful complaint I have against the Moorean theory by correctly theorizing that more than just fantasy is morally important; other imagination may be of moral interest so long as it is coupled with the right, or wrong, sort of response.

Before discussing new criticisms, which I again argue are unsuccessful, I am going to explain how this would fit into a new standard argument. Take a common dream that people often feel guilty about: in the dream, someone cheats on their partner. Within the dream, the person enjoys cheating on their partner. However, this is not sufficient under the Moorean theory to establish wrongdoing. It must also be the case that the person, *while dreaming*, enjoys the dream. The reason for this is that if the imagination theory is true, then the person could plausibly imagine that they cheat and imagine that they enjoy it. This is different from *actually* enjoying it; it is not the case that merely because someone responds in one way in the dream that they are responding to the dream in that same way. If the new Moorean theory is true, then the substituting the imagination theory of dreams for the orthodoxy is not sufficient to avoid dream morality.

In the last third of the paper, I defend against some objections. Since this is a new space, these objections are original to me although some take cues from existing literature on the ethics of fantasy. The first objection is that dreams are not willed, and only willed imagination is of moral import.

³⁶⁷ Smuts (2015: 8)

³⁶⁸ A criticism I wish to head off here is that “inappropriate” is not informative enough. There will likely be different opinions on what is and is not inappropriate. I do not wish to offer a full account on this. I am happy to rely on intuitive notions; it is wrong to be disgusted by the good; it is wrong to be aroused by the wrong; etc.

Objection 1: Willed vs Unwilled

An objection to my new Moorean theory could be that it does not properly distinguish between willed fantasies and unwilled fantasies. This objection has two avenues: first the objection could be that unwilled fantasies are not morally important and second it would claim that dreams are *always* unwilled fantasies. I deal with this second criticism later, and for now focus on the distinction between will and unwilled imagination.

Smuts distinguishes between “willful imagination” and “spontaneous fantasy”.^{369 370} Smuts understands “willful imagination” in the same way that Ichikawa understands it: those imaginative experiences are in some way under our control. An example of willful imagination could be me asking you to imagine a cat followed by you doing so. Smuts understands “spontaneous fantasy” as those imaginative experiences that we do not deliberately conjure up; that do not appear to be under our conscious control and if they are under our control, they are so in a limited way.

There are two things to say: the first is that even if it were the case that we had no control over spontaneous fantasies that would not exclude them from the possibility moral evaluation. Consider the following case:

A person who routinely spontaneously fantasizes about violently raping anyone they meet, man, woman, child, or beast. They aren't a rapist³⁷¹; they just pleurably imagine raping, and they do it a lot. Similarly, we can imagine someone who spontaneously imagines raping children whenever he masturbates.³⁷²

Smuts continues by saying that these cases are deeply troubling and while the spontaneous nature of the fantasies might remove responsibility, we should still hold them in disesteem.³⁷³ Smuts ties disesteem and the act of shaming together. In reference to these two examples, he writes: “If shame isn’t appropriate in these cases, I’m not sure it ever is.” I think Smuts is right, and there is something powerfully intuitive about how worthy of disesteem and shame these fantasists are. An alternative case:

A person who routinely spontaneously imagines beating every woman they encounter. They do not enjoy this, but they do not actively hate it. They would never beat someone.

In this alternative case, even though they do not enjoy the imaginative experience they are still doing something that looks problematic.

Someone might retort, however, that the examples given focus on repeat offenders. What is to be said of those who have spontaneous imaginative experiences that are not recurring? Here is an example, and I believe the person having it looks worthy of shame: imagine someone who spontaneously fantasies

³⁶⁹ I expand this to spontaneous imagination.

³⁷⁰ Smuts (2015: 11)

³⁷¹ Remember we are assuming internalism.

³⁷² Smuts (2015: 7)

³⁷³ Smuts understands disesteem as something far less than blame. It’s a lower rung on the moral evaluation ladder.

about raping someone they have just met. This is the first time they have had a fantasy of this sort. They would not assault someone, but they are experiencing pleasure while imagining it in this instance. This is still horrific: if someone reports that they had this fantasy, we will shame them, and we would be right to do so.

The second thing to say is that spontaneous fantasies, even if they are not willed, still come from us. In most cases³⁷⁴, we are the makers of the imagined content. In **all** dream cases, we are the makers of the imagined content. It is also us who feel pleasure in response to that imagined content. As Smuts asks: who else could be responsible? It is because of these two points that I think that while spontaneous fantasies might be evaluated differently from willed fantasies, they are still morally assessable.

However, this discussion may be moot given that Ichikawa believes that dreams *are* subject to the will. Ichikawa seems to think a constitutive part of the nature of imagination is that they *are* something that is under our control. Ichikawa, along with McGinn, cites Wittgenstein:

We do not ‘banish’ visual impression as we do images. And we don’t say of the former, either, that we might *not* banish them³⁷⁵ ... The concept of imagining is rather like one of doing than receiving. Imaging is a creative act. (And is of course so called.)^{376 377}

Ichikawa continues that he thinks the view that imagination is subject to the will is “correct.”³⁷⁸ There are a myriad of problem cases. For example, people who have experienced something traumatic may find themselves unable to stop imagining some event over and over. Similarly, people who are heavily addicted may be unable to stop imagining their next fix. People with serious anxiety may not be able to stop imagining how their life might collapse. Ichikawa says that these cases do not show that imagination is not subject to the will. Instead, these are just instances where we fail to exert our will over our imagination, but imagination is still the sort of thing that is subject to the will. He writes that we know what it is like to *try* to stop imagining something and fail but that trying is evidence of our ability to successfully banish a thought. Since dreams are imaginative experiences, according to Ichikawa, he argues that dreams are also subject to our will.

The position that all dreams are subject to the will seems peculiar. Again, it is easy to think of a myriad of problem cases. And Ichikawa’s response will be the same: dreams are the sort of thing that is subject to the will even if we sometimes, or even routinely, fail to subjugate them. This might not be as dubious as it immediately seemed. People routinely report being able to wake themselves up from a nightmare.³⁷⁹ Lucid dreams may also provide reason to think Ichikawa is right: lucid dreams do not seem to be a different activity from dreaming. The key difference appears to be that we know we can, and

³⁷⁴ There are cases of guided imagination. For instance, reading a book seems to be an instance of guided imagination.

³⁷⁵ Wittgenstein (1967: 621)

³⁷⁶ Wittgenstein (1967: 633)

³⁷⁷ Ichikawa (2009: 106)

³⁷⁸ Ichikawa (2009: 107)

³⁷⁹ For instance, see “Is it Normal that I Can Wake Myself Up from Nightmares?” posted on Quora by an anonymous poster.

succeed, in manipulating the dream. It is not as though the dream *becomes* manipulatable. So, it does not seem absurd to think that dreams are the sort of thing that are subject to the will. I am content granting this and proponents of the imagination view should as well for reasons discussed earlier in the chapter.

To be clear: under such an account, it seems to be the case that even if dreams were not best categorised as “willful” they are still best understood as an experience that is the sort of experience that is best under our control. It could be the case that dreams are something we *can* control but are never properly able to so.

This does not mean doing away with the spontaneous and willed distinction. There is place of nuance. However, the key defense that some imaginative experiences are of the sort that they are not the proper object of moral evaluation looks faulty since we are assuming the no special condition argument *and* all imaginative experiences are subject to the will. It is unclear that dreams not being willed is sufficient to remove wrongdoing and it is unclear that dreams are willed.

Objection 2: Methodological Worries

The second worry is that it is extremely difficult to know which dreams would be of moral import.³⁸⁰ There are two ways that dreams could be the proper objects of moral evaluation if the new Moorean theory is true.

In the first set of cases, what one feels in the dream phenomenologically presents as what one is *actually* feeling. For instance, in Saint Augustine’s sex dreams he reports that he is aroused in the dream and aroused in real life. This could be the case for some dreams even given the imagination theory: it could be the case that you imagine X, you imagine you enjoy X, and you **actually** enjoy X. Alternatively, one might think that phenomenological presentation is misleading. It could be the case that, *while dreaming*, you respond to the dream in a different way; you might *really* be disgusted. Or, you might *really* have no emotional response to the dream content. Put differently, it is not the case that if one dreams that they enjoy X that they really do enjoy X or that they enjoy dreaming X. Given the possibility of these second set of cases, can we confidently say that dreams are ever of moral import; can we ever confidently say that people react inappropriately *while dreaming*?

I believe we have good reasons to think that we do respond to dreams while dreaming.³⁸¹ There are many cases where someone wakes up *still* feeling what they felt while dreaming. For instance, try to remember a nightmare you have had in the past. Some horrible thing is happening to you and you are

³⁸⁰ I have highlighted worries like this in previous chapters. It therefore seems dialectically consistent to defend myself against it. This might not be a worry, however, that someone cares about. For instance, it is unlikely Driver is worried about methodological worries.

³⁸¹ Personally, I have often woken up feeling something. This happens without recalling the dream; it seems that the emotional response had while dreaming persists.

afraid. You are jolted awake and, even if it is only for a moment, you are still afraid. It takes you a second to recognize your bedroom and to calm down. The situation I am describing is not uncommon.³⁸² Another common example is waking up still aroused.³⁸³

We can also once again point to the phenomenology of dreaming for support. It really does *feel* like we have emotional reactions while dreaming. When we report our dreams, we really do report them as though what was felt *in the dream* was often felt *while dreaming*. Nightmare cases are, again, good examples. Still, someone could persist that there is still a worry that we should not place too much trust in phenomenology or dream reports.

I believe that we have good reasons to think we do react both *in the dream* and *while dreaming*. The worry seems conceptual and requires that we throw out the two most important tools we currently have to investigate dreaming. Elsewhere in the thesis, I discuss the importance of phenomenology and dream reports in the contemporary study of dreams. A skepticism of these is warranted, however too much skepticism means that the philosophical study of dreams does not, and perhaps cannot, ever get off the ground.³⁸⁴ The skepticism required to motivate the methodological worry is, then, too much.

Objection 3: i-States

In this section, I consider the objection that we do not react with disgust, pleasure, etc while dreaming. If this were the case, then it is unclear that dreams would be the proper objects of moral evaluation. The objection goes that while dream, we do not respond with disgust, pleasure, etc but instead respond with imagined disgust, imagined pleasure, etc. From now on, I will call these i-states.

Recall what I have said about the imagination theory of dreams and beliefs. Some theorists, for example Ichikawa, hold that dreams are constituted by propositional imagination. Ichikawa believes that *while dreaming* I do not form beliefs related to the content on the dream. Instead, I either imagine that I form a belief that p; imagine that I believe p; or imagine that p. For example, picture a dream where you are running late for a train. Ichikawa does not think that you *really* believe that you missed your train. Instead, you either imagine that you missed your train; imagine that you believe that you missed your train; or imagine that formed the belief that you missed your train. Someone could argue that this account also extends to the emotional responses one has in dreams. For instance, picture that in the dream Frank imagines a homosexual couple kissing. Instead of disgust, it could be the case that Frank imagines he is

³⁸² Night terrors, or sleep terrors, are episodes of screaming, fear and failing while asleep. 40% of children have night terrors, and a common situation is that the child wakes up afraid and inconsolable but will not remember their dream. This lends credence to the theory that it is not the case that we remember the dream *and then react*.

³⁸³ Discussed by Mann and later by me is the case of Saint Augustine. Not only is Saint Augustine worried about the content of his dreams he is also worried that he is having wet dreams. The existence of wet dreams seem like a good reason to think that you *do* respond with pleasure in at least some dreams. As Augustine says, “nature result”.

³⁸⁴ This has been demotivated in the introduction of this thesis.

disgusted or experiences some new response called imagined-disgust. I do not believe this is what is happening while dreaming and will argue against it.

The chief similar case, that of quasi-emotions³⁸⁵, is importantly different from dreaming and so cannot be appealed to. Quasi-Emotions are a theory of what i-states are and why they exist. I will use Kendall Walton's account to explain both features. The phenomenal character of quasi-emotions is said to be the same as waking states. Walton uses fiction to illustrate. Remember when you were watching a scary movie, and you reported that you felt afraid. Walton thinks that the 'fear' experienced in response to media is actually an i-fear (here, quasi-fear), but you were right to report that it had the same character as actual fear³⁸⁶. The second property is about what causes i-states. Walton writes "Charles believes (he knows) that make-believedly the green slime [in the movie he is watching] is bearing down on him and he is in danger of being destroyed by it. His quasi-fear results from that belief."³⁸⁷ So, Walton's view is that quasi-emotions can only occur when we do not believe the content we are responding to is real. This explains, the quasi-emotionist says, why when feeling i-fear you do not run out the cinema like you would if you were experiencing real fear.

I deal with the second property first: it does not seem to be the case that the meta-awareness required for quasi-emotions is always present while non-lucidly dreaming. There are some reasons to believe that we do know that we are dreaming: there are instances where people are able to wake themselves up; sometimes people are able to form the belief that they might be dreaming by recognizing the absurdity of the dream content, and so on. However, for most cases it appears we do not know that we are dreaming. There is a myriad of reasons to believe this is true: we rarely, if ever, consciously recognize the absurdity of a dream; we rarely, if ever, recognize the lack of continuity with our waking life; nightmares can jolt us awake; when muscle atonia is not present agents act out their dreams in a way daydreamers do not. The last point is that lucid dreaming is primarily instigated by the dreamer recognizing they are dreaming. So, if someone is non-lucidly dreaming it stands to reason they likely do not know they are dreaming.³⁸⁸ It is also worth noting that, by the standard argument and the variations that I am including, it would have to be the case that someone knows that they are dreaming *all of the time* since the dream morality thesis only

³⁸⁵ There is considerable doubt about whether quasi-emotions even exist. I place these doubts to the side and argue that *even if they do* the dream morality thesis holds.

³⁸⁶ It is plausible that quasi-fear, and other quasi-emotions, do not have the same character as their genuine counterparts. It could be that they are instead *mistaken* for having the same character. For another example, see hallucinations. It is often held that hallucinatory experiences lack vividness, but they are often mistaken as having the same character as successful perceptual experiences.

³⁸⁷ Walton (1978: 14)

³⁸⁸ The counter to this looks incredibly tenuous. Someone would have to claim that despite all appearances and all phenomenology that we really do know that we are dreaming all of the time.

requires that these imaginative experiences, if they are imaginative experiences, are sometimes the proper objects of moral evaluation.

Now, I deal with the first property of quasi-emotions and of i-states: the character. The phenomenological difference between i-states and other states is profound and gives us good reason to think that we do not respond to dream content with i-states. The first example is Saint Augustine, who writes: “While I am awake [sexual images] have no power into my thoughts, but in sleep they not only arouse pleasure but even elicit consent and are very like the actual act.”³⁸⁹ He continues that the images are indistinguishable from waking experience, and “it immediately move (sic) the flesh, and the nature (sic) result [having a wet dream] follows.”³⁹⁰ Augustine reports that he is *really* feeling aroused. He also reports that he has good evidence that he is aroused: he has a wet dream! When I imagine arousal, no such event happens, and no such feelings are aroused. These have a different character. Nightmares are another example to support my claim. Defenders of i-states often point to responses to fiction to illuminate their point. When someone is in a cinema watching some horror movie, they are often said to be experiencing an i-fear rather than fear. However, it seems to me that the fear felt in a nightmare is fundamentally different from the fear felt in a cinema. One metric is to look at the reactions one has in cases of quasi-emotion and genuine emotion.³⁹¹ In cases of imagination, you might have some of the same physical reactions. However, you will not have *exactly* the same physical profile. Here is a case that I think highlights the difference: I am leaving the theatre with a friend. We have just seen a scary movie and are discussing it. I ask if they found it scary. They report an enthusiastic “yes”. But I persist: were you *really* afraid? They think about it, and then they report “no, but the movie was frightening!” This conversation makes sense to me: they answered that they were afraid because they thought I was asking about i-fear, which is the type of fear one experiences at the cinema, but when I clarify it seems as though I am asking about an emotion with a different, more severe character. Part of that severe response is a physical effect: while a movie may increase your heart rate it seems unlikely to have you swing at the screen. So, your friend ponders the question and responds “No.” I think this conversation shows an important difference between fear and i-fear. I have discussed two cases, but I do not think those are the only cases: I think a thorough example of i-states will show that most, if not all, i-states have a different phenomenological character than “real” waking states.

So far, I have argued that the reactions one has in the cinema to media (or in response to other fiction) are markedly different from the responses that we have in dreams. I did this because of the assumption

³⁸⁹ Augustine (1991: 30, X)

³⁹⁰ Augustine is not the only Catholic worried about having wet dreams. For a fuller discussion, see Wei (2012).

³⁹¹ Functionalists will be sympathetic to this methodology, but Walton also uses outputs to distinguish quasi-emotions from emotions so one needn’t be a functionalist to find this compelling.

that i-states are morally neutral and so i-states being the responses had while dreaming would make dream morality impossible. I now turn to Amy Kind for two criticisms.

Amy Kind argues that i-desires may be morally assessable. Amy Kind argues that i-desires are implausible because they fail to properly account for how we ought to act in accordance to fiction. There are two cases I wish to discuss from Kind's paper: (1) that desires about the non-actual are still bound by certain norms which runs contra to the idea that i-desires would have different norms and (2) that i-desires conjured up during play are still morally assessable. Amy Kind's paper "The Puzzle of Imaginative Desire" focuses on the implausibility of i-desires.

Amy Kind begins by saying "the introduction of i-desires is both ontologically profligate and unnecessary, and most importantly, fails to make sense of what we are doing in the imaginative contexts in question."³⁹² This is because i-desires fail to accurately address issues around normative constraints. Here is an example: let's say you have a desire to see Kylo Ren punished for killing his father Han Solo. This desire looks to be reasonable despite knowing that Kylo Ren is not a real person and has not committed any real crimes against any other real people.

Compare this to a case with desire in non-fiction case. Kind³⁹³ asks us to picture coming home to a messy house: glasses broken, and silverware thrown from open drawers. But the house was not messed up by you.³⁹⁴ She argues it is perfectly reasonable to desire the perpetrator punished. However, if you discover that the damage to your glasses and silverware was caused by an earthquake that desire no longer seems rational since there is no perpetrator to be punished.

If we are meant to be responding to non-actual objects differently, we would expect different norms. However, the inexistence of Kylo Ren *does not* undercut the reasonableness of wanting him punished but inexistence in non-fiction cases *does not* undercut the reasonableness. Kind writes that this issue – that there are differences in how we approach desires related to fiction and non-fiction – fails to understand just how often we have desires about the non-actual. We have desires, she writes, about the past and the future; about the happiness of people who may not even exist like my grandchildren; or even that an event turn out differently.³⁹⁵

This illuminates a point: the object of a desire being non-actual does not seem particularly queer and does not mean it escapes the 'norms' of desire. Here, Kind has talked about the norms of which

³⁹² Kind (2011: 1)

³⁹³ Kind is arguing against, in this section of her paper, Gregory Currie's *Desire in Imagination*. For a fuller account of the debate, see Currie (2002), as well as (Kind 2011).

³⁹⁴ Kind (2011: 5)

³⁹⁵ Kind (2011: 5)

desires are reasonable. But plausibly we can expand that to the ethical norms around desires. I try to motivate this, tentatively, by appealing to intuitions. Plausibly, some desires are not merely unreasonably but actually immoral. Let's repeat the earthquake example: let's say that not only is your kitchen brutalized by an earthquake and that you believe an intruder is to blame but that you desire that the intruder's hands be cut off as punishment. This is unreasonable and it is unreasonable in an immoral way.³⁹⁶ Something similarly, if not identically, immoral seems to be occurring if you desire that Kylo Ren be brutally tortured for the rest of his life for murdering his father. The object of the desire being non-actual does not, again, undercut how morally unreasonable these desires look to be!

While Kind, correctly, takes this as evidence against i-desires since they look to be explanatory inert my point is more modest: *even if* i-desires exist they look bound by similar norms to non-i-states. If this were the case, we have little reason to think i-desires would not be bound up by the same, possibly moral, norms.

I wish to quickly discuss whether i-states are in fact morally neutral. My point is not that i-states would be morally assessable as component features of a fantasy, but I wish to highlight that even if dreams are constituted by i-states then it does not necessarily follow that those i-states are not the project object of moral assessment. This is intended as a tentative and prospective line of reasoning. I am content rejecting i-states altogether.

The second part of Kind's paper I discuss is around the ethical play. Kind asks us to suppose that one of her sons is pretending to be a terrible monster.³⁹⁷ He comes at Kind with his teeth chomping menacingly because he believes that terrible monsters bite. Regardless of him playing in a game of pretend, we would hold him accountable if he actually bit Kind. We would say that even though it is possibly the case that terrible monsters bite good philosophers, we should not even pretend to be them.³⁹⁸ Kind explains, even if her son insists this is what terrible monsters do, that "he's desiring to behave *exactly*³⁹⁹ like a terrible monster would behave – or as close as he can get – and I need to explain to him that this a problematic desire for him to have."⁴⁰⁰ Kind continues by explaining that one can only approximate a terrible monster in her house since biting is firmly off-limits.

³⁹⁶ This being true relies on there being moral truth about appropriate punishments, but I take this to be powerfully intuitive.

³⁹⁷ Kind (2011: 15)

³⁹⁸ This is the case Kind uses and it illustrates the point well. There are a myriad of other cases that lead us to the say similar things. We can imagine an actor who *actually* strikes a co-actor in play, for instance. Another case might be sexual role play where there are still things it is not kosher to *actually* do even if the appearance of them is desired by all participants.

³⁹⁹ Her emphasis.

⁴⁰⁰ Kind (2011: 15)

Here is the point I wish to take from this: i-desires (if they even exist) are evidence of actual desires that are problematic⁴⁰¹ even if they are not themselves desires. Is it ever the case that, if i-desires exist in dreams, that they are evidence of actual desires? The answer seems to be yes. I take it that desires are motivating and therefore one must ask why we have the i-desires we do if not for other desires? This looks to me a closed question. Let's return to Augustine's dream of sexual infidelity. Someone could say that Augustine i-desires to have sex with these women. He i-desires to break his vows to God and the Church. If these i-desires do exist, they do not come from nothing. Plausibly, they are caused by real desires that may themselves be problematic.

And this is only if we accept that i-desires exist. Kind argues that it is simpler and makes better sense of the motivational content desires have to say that play is constituted by desires rather than i-desires. Kind writes:

“The best way to make sense of the fact that we hold people accountable for their apparent desires towards fictional characters is that those apparent desires are genuine desires. Likewise, the best way to make sense of the fact that we hold people accountable for the conative attitudes motivating their pretend behaviour is that these attitudes are genuine desires, the same sort of conative attitudes that motivate ordinary behaviour”⁴⁰²

And then she continues by saying that we do not typically hold people accountable for what they *merely* imagine⁴⁰³, but we do for what they desire.

I discussed the objection that dreamers are not experienced *real* morally relevant responses to the content in their dream. I have talked about i-states and quasi-emotions. I have problematized both as theories, but I have argued that even if we accept the existence of i-states and quasi-emotions we have little reason to think those are present in dreams. Again, this line is intended to give us reason to think that claiming that i-states constitute dreams is not, by itself, sufficient to escape dream morality. I have given reasons to think i-states do not constitute dreams, but even if they do, they might merely be evidence of other states which are capable of being morally problematic.⁴⁰⁴

⁴⁰¹ Kind takes her point to be one about ontological bloat: we hold people accountable for their play desires as if they were actual desires. This attacks the claim that i-desires have some unique explanatory power.

⁴⁰² Kind (2011: 15)

⁴⁰³ It is hard to know if Kind would disagree with what I have said, but I take her to be saying that we do not hold people accountable for *just* imagining something. I have not argued for that as I have argued for the conjunction of some imagined content with some response being evaluable.

⁴⁰⁴ I discuss, in the conclusion, the possibility of i-states themselves being problematic. Take, for example, a method actor who imagines what it would be like to be a serial killer. He imagines killing women and imagines feeling joy. It seems plausible that a truly moral agent would never do this. Similarly, someone who imagines disgust at something virtuous or morally neutral – like a loving couple – might be doing something wrong if that i-disgust is felt particularly vividly. But that is outside the scope of this chapter.

As a final note, it seems plausible that an inappropriate response to some content could be a lack of a certain emotion rather than some opposite emotion. Let's consider an example: I walk by a slave owner beating their slave. Rather than feeling anger or disgust I feel nothing. There is only apathy. This looks to me to be morally reprehensible. It looks less reprehensible than feeling joy at the sight of a slave being beaten, but none the less it looks wrong.

I discussed the objection that dreamers are not experienced *real* morally relevant responses to the content in their dream. I have talked about i-states and quasi-emotions. I have problematized both as theories, but I have argued that even if we accept the existence of i-states and quasi-emotions we have little reason to think those are present in dreams. And, citing Kind, gave some reason to suggest that even if i-states were present in dreams it was possible that this would not be sufficient to remove the possibility of dream morality.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have explained the imagination theory of dreaming. I contrasted it to the orthodoxy. I posed the question "does the imagination theory, when substituted into the standard argument, mean that the dream morality thesis is avoidable?" I have examined different accounts of the ethics of imagination and offered my own version as well. I argued that dream morality is still possible given the imagination theory and considered some objections before ruling that they are unsuccessful.

In the next chapter, I consider whether substituting both externalism and the imagination theory of dreams for the internalism and the orthodoxy allows one to avoid the dream morality thesis.

Chapter 8 Does a Combination of the Imagination Theory and Externalism Avoid Dream Morality?

In previous chapters, I have focused on the standard argument for dream morality. In chapter two, I argued that evaluational externalists, people who believe that the moral quality of an action is determined by features external to the agent⁴⁰⁵, should embrace the dream morality. In chapter three, I argued that the imagination theory of dreams, when coupled with the other theses in the original standard argument, also leads to dream morality. In this chapter, I argue that embracing *both* the imagination theory and evaluational externalism is not sufficient to avoid dream morality. I assess two claims: the dreams have consequences, and that imagination has consequences and dreams inherit moral evaluability by being instances of imagination.⁴⁰⁶

The first section of this shorter chapter is a quick run-through the imagination theory; evaluational externalism; and the standard argument.⁴⁰⁷ In the second section, I discuss whether dreams have consequences that the evaluational externalist would be interested in⁴⁰⁸, in the final section, consider if dreams could be morally evaluable since they look to be instances of morally evaluable imagination. For instance, I discuss if dreams could ever be considered instances of visualisation.⁴⁰⁹ The conclusions I offer in this chapter are modest: I argue that some previous arguments that I have dismissed will be more effective here and that it seems plausible that holding externalism and imagination theory of dreams to be true does not lead to a straightforward escape from dream morality.

The Imagination Theory

Put concisely⁴¹⁰, the imagination theory of dreams is that dreams are constituted by propositional imagination and/or mental imagery. The theory is contrasted with the orthodox theory of dreams which is that dreams are more like hallucination: dreamers form propositional attitudes as they would in waking life and the imagery is hallucinatory.⁴¹¹ To help explain the imagination theory, in the dream, Benjamin cheats on his partner. He, in the dream, he believes that he will not get caught and believes that he is cheating. In the dream, he forms this intention to cheat and actualizes that intention. If the imagination view is true, then while asleep Benjamin has imagined he has cheated on his partner; imagined he has these intentions and beliefs; and imagined this is morally permissible. Plausibly, he has also imagined, while asleep, imagery.

⁴⁰⁵ Most commonly, this refers to the consequences (or typical/systematic consequences) of an action. For instance, the reason why an externalist would think that drunk driving is morally abhorrent is because it harms people.

⁴⁰⁶ Importantly for both these claims, I will discuss what is meant by ‘consequence’. It could be, for instance, that dream actions never have direct consequences but may play an important casual role in some decision making.

⁴⁰⁷ The brevity is because these are discussed elsewhere.

⁴⁰⁸ I take material I have discussed in chapter two and continue to discuss it here. Now, however, I am treating the imagination theory as true rather than the orthodoxy.

⁴⁰⁹ This should be familiar as it is reminiscent of an argument given by Cowan (2021) discussed in chapter two.

⁴¹⁰ And recall that different proponents of the imagination theory of dreams hold to different versions of the theory.

⁴¹¹ Hallucinations may be mental imagery and so this distinction might collapse. However, I do not wish to weigh in, but readers are invited to keep it in mind. See chapter 3 for more.

Evaluational Internalism

Briefly, evaluational externalists believe “the moral quality of a person’s agency, what they do, is fully determined by factors external to their agency.”⁴¹² The most common factor is the consequences of the action. For instance, an externalist would find cheating on your partner to be wrong because it harms the partner given that harm is some moral bad. There are many sorts of externalism and I have discussed two in the thesis already: naïve externalism and SAD⁴¹³ externalism. Naïve externalists hold that an action should be evaluated by the direct consequences that action has. So, a naïve externalist would hold that a drunk driver has *only* done something wrong *if* they cause some harm; a drunk driver who drives home safely has done nothing wrong. In opposition, SAD externalists believe that the systematic consequences are part of what makes an action morally evaluable: so, the drunk driver has done something wrong by SAD lights because driving drunk *systematically*⁴¹⁴ leads to some harm e.g. damaging people and property.

In chapter two, I argued that we ought to favour SAD externalism over naïve externalism since the bullet that SAD externalists must bite (dream morality) is less of a unpalatable than the bullet naïve externalists are forced to bite: moral luck.⁴¹⁵ I argued that there were insufficient reasons to think that naïve externalists are committed to dream morality. In this chapter, I reconsider some of those arguments given the imagination theory. I then repurpose Cowan’s token-type arguments, which I have also used, given the imagination theory.

Before this, I give a brief recount of the standard argument.

The New-New Standard Argument

An objection someone might have had to the previous chapters is that substituting *one* thesis may not be sufficient to avoid dream morality. Here, I substitute internalism for externalism and the orthodoxy for the imagination view:

1. “Evaluational Externalism: the moral quality of a person’s agency, what they do, is fully determined by factors that are external to their agency, e.g. the production of good or bad effects such as pleasure or harm.”⁴¹⁶

⁴¹² Cowan (2021: 10)

⁴¹³ SAD stands for Systematic, Actual and Direct. For a richer discussion on this view, see chapter two.

⁴¹⁴ There are other caveats. Again, see chapter two.

⁴¹⁵ Moral luck, briefly, is when an agent’s actions or traits are morally evaluable but those actions or traits were beyond their control. For instance, a would-be murderer makes a sincere attempt at murder but fails because a passing bus blocks his shot. Moral luck is widely considered to be immensely problematic. See chapter two of this thesis for more.

⁴¹⁶ Cowan (2021: 10)

2. Imagination Theory: “non-lucid dreams are constituted by sensory imagery and propositional imaginings that are of the same psychological type as those formed in waking life.”⁴¹⁷ ⁴¹⁸
3. No Special Condition: “non-lucid dreamers are not always in a special condition rendering them immune from moral assessment.”⁴¹⁹ ⁴²⁰

An additional thesis is needed:

4. Agents, in the dream, do things that would be of moral import if evaluational externalism is true, e.g. dream actions produce good or bad effects such as pleasure or harm.

For the purposes of this chapter, I am treating theses one through three as true. It is this last thesis, the externalist dream content thesis, that I treat as contentious.

There is an uninteresting⁴²¹ way in which dreams acts cause pleasure or harm that I wish to discuss first. When I do something in a dream, I might wake up and be upset that I have done this thing! Conversely, I might remember a dream action fondly which causes some pleasure. There are similar cases: reporting what I do in a dream might cause the person I report to harm or pleasure, or the consequences of that reporting might cause harm or pleasure. I believe this is finding the wrongdoing in the wrong places. The wrongdoing, or rightdoing, is in the remembering and in the reporting of the dream. It does not seem to be in the dream actions itself. We can see this clearly when we see some typically good-seeming action looks bad when recalled by someone inappropriately: for example, I help a friend. This action is good, and by some lights right, because it gives the friend pleasure. However, if recalling this hurt me or sent me into a depression then the fault seems to lie with me, or my circumstances, and not the action done by my friend.

There is another uninteresting way in which dreams might have consequences. People may act out their dreams through sleep walking. Let us say that someone dreams that they murder their partner but because they were sleep walking they actually *did* murder their partner. Such cases seem tragic and might be informative in how we look at dream acts, but are extremely rare and again the wrongdoing seems to located in the murder of the person and not the dreamt murder of the person.

Does Dream Morality Follow from Naïve Externalism and the Imagination Theory?

⁴¹⁷ Cowan (2021: 24)

⁴¹⁸ Cowan calls this the “modest” version of the imagination theory. The robust version involves i-states. I have given reasons in a previous chapter to think why the ‘robust’ account is untenable. However, nothing in this chapter hinges on the robust theory being false.

⁴¹⁹ Cowan (2021: 5)

⁴²⁰ Cowan notes that the No Special Condition thesis may be baked into the orthodoxy. It is certainly not baked into the imagination view. In fact, some may think (falsely) that the imagination view entails the opposite: that since dreamers are imagining they cannot be judged for what they imagine. This is discussed more in the penultimate chapter of the thesis.

⁴²¹ Uninteresting to the thesis.

For dream morality to follow from naïve externalism it would have to be the case that dreams have immediate or actual consequences. I argue that the conjunction of naïve externalism and the imagination theory is more likely to lead to dream morality although it is far from proven. This is contra to Driver. Driver argues that dreams do not have ‘actual’ consequences. She writes:

To many {dream morality} seems odd, because in a dream, presumably, one’s willings have no actual consequences. The lie told in a dream has no actual bad effects since in the dream no actual persons are led astray, nor is there any serious prospect that they will be.⁴²²

Driver is right in saying that no one is *actually* deceived when you lie in a dream, but this does not entail that the dream-action of lying has no consequence. Elsewhere in the thesis, I have discussed famous cases where dreams have inspired people from Oscar winners to Nobel Prize winners. There is also a general trend of people reporting that dreams lead them to be more creative or that they have ideas from dreams.⁴²³ 20% of people report that dreams will affect their choices either sometimes or often or always.⁴²⁴ Many report that dreams change how they see their partners, or co-workers, or family.⁴²⁵

When discussed within the context of the orthodoxy, it is straightforward to dismiss much of this data⁴²⁶. It is unclear what dream acts are causing what; when one lies in real life the harm is easy to locate as is the cause of it. Here, it is not as easy: is it merely having the dream? Is it a specific action undertaken within the dream? We do not have an answer.

However, if we do not assume the orthodoxy then these questions fall by the wayside and the position that dreams *do* have direct consequences has more bite. One of the criticisms Cowan offers against the idea that dreams have straightforward morally evaluable consequences is that the studies discussed do not distinguish between action and content. For the imagination view of dreaming, the action **is** the content. Here is an example to illustrate:

Frank cheats on his loving partner. He does so knowing it is cheating and does it anyway. In the dream, he enjoys cheating and makes plans to do it again.

For a proponent of the imagination theory, while dreaming Frank imagined that he cheated on his partner and imagined the rest of the content of the dream. Frank is not forming beliefs or attempting actions: instead, the action he preforms is imagining. By doing away with the distinction between action and content, by merging action and content, we do away with the objection that we cannot tell if it is the *actions* that are causal.

Still, there are still issues with saying that dreams are empirically proved to be directly causal. Selterman, Apertroaia, Riela, Aron’s paper “Dreaming of You: Behaviour and Emotion in Dreams of

⁴²² Driver (2007: 1)

⁴²³ See Schredl & Erlacher (2007).

⁴²⁴ See Pagel & Vann (1992).

⁴²⁵ Also Pagel & Vann (1992).

⁴²⁶ I discuss this data in more detail in chapter two.

Significant Others Predict” could, purportedly, be used to argue that dreams have consequences. They conducted a study involving over 60 students who had been in long term relationships. They collected over 800 dreams. They found a correlation between dream infidelity and less intimacy in one’s waking relationships. They also found dreams containing jealousy accurately predict jealousy in waking life. Therefore, an intuitive assumption is that cheating dreams lead to less intimate waking relationships.

Someone might believe that problems from previous chapters persist: it is hard to tell if these dreams *cause* a lack of intimacy or if they are a symptom of some other attitude or mental state that causes a lack of intimacy. However, I believe this may be missing the forest for the trees. So long as the dreams are playing a role in causal story, they are plausibly morally evaluable. Here is a non-dream example to illustrate:

Jeffery is criminally insane. He plans to kill a person next Tuesday. Between now and next Tuesday, he imagines killing them. As he imagines this, he becomes obsessed with the murder. It is unclear that the imaginative experiences Jeffery is planning are causal – since they only come about *after* a plan – but they are plausibly still contributing to the murder.

I picked this example because little empirical work has been done on the causal effects of imagination, but the work that has been done has been done by crime-fighting organizations like the FBI. They posit that a rich fantasy life is an important step in becoming a serial killer.⁴²⁷ It is unclear if this is directly causal – a rich fantasy life orientated towards murder is a symptom of distressing childhood and psychological problems – but it is plausible to that we might still morally assess the action.

The methodology I propose is to counterfactually analyze the imaginative event. Let us say that Jeffery *would not have* committed the murder had he not imagined it. Then it seems like his imagining it is leading to some sort of bad that would not have occurred otherwise. It looks, to the externalist, to be morally wrong.

I believe this could translate to dreams, especially in regard to cheating dreams. Could it be the case that someone has a less intimate relationship because of a dream they have had? Plausibly. Could it be the case that someone experiences jealousy because of a dream that comes to affect their waking relationship in a negative way? Again, plausibly.

This is tentative work and the conclusions I have given in this section have been modest. The empirical data required to support this conclusion, especially for dreams, simply does not exist. But this is a problem that besets any analysis of consequence of imagination, and in fact might beset any analysis of consequence. For example, it may be unclear which attitudes are symptomatic and which are causal. In the next section, I discuss a different avenue to dream morality.

The Token-Type Argument

⁴²⁷ For example, see Nicola Malizia (2017).

In a previous chapter, I discussed Cowan's token-type argument. He posited, and I agreed, that dream actions 'inherit' their moral evaluability by being a token of type. Cowan writes that dream propositional attitudes are *of the same type* as waking propositional attitudes.⁴²⁸ For example, if someone were to form the intention to cheat in the dream this intention is of this is a token of the type 'intention to cheat'. This extends to actions: when someone *tries* to cheat in the dream, even though while they are chronically unsuccessful, they are performing the action of trying to cheat. Such an action, under some⁴²⁹ externalisms, is morally evaluable because it is a type of some evaluable action.

I now explain SAD externalism and token-types. SAD externalists think that some trait or action can be the proper object of moral evaluation if it is a token of a type of some trait or action that leads to the bad. For example, driving drunk is a type of action that systematically leads to harming people. Even if a drunk driver manages to get home safely without damaging anyone or any property, they have committed a type of action that systematically leads to the bad and so that action is wrong, and they were in the wrong for doing it.⁴³⁰ Before continuing, I wish to give a quick note on systematism.

Cowan explains systematism as focusing on systematic effects: "those that are actually produced under normal circumstances."⁴³¹ I do not understand systematic results to be inevitable or even common; instead, I see systematic consequences that are reasonable expectations from an action. This makes better sense of intuitions: presumably, drunk driving is systematically connected to harm *even if* a minority of drunk driving incidents lead to harm.

I have argued, in chapter 2, that if we are going to be externalists we should be SAD externalists. The primary motivation is that SAD externalists avoid moral luck.

So far in this short chapter I have argued that it is perhaps more likely that what dreamers do while dreaming is morally evaluable if the imagination view is true instead of the orthodoxy. But I also believe that, and will show that, even if what we do while dreaming does not clearly produce consequences imagining itself is something that can, under some circumstances, be morally evaluable.

This begets the question: is imagination a type of action which leads to consequences? In this next section, I discuss some different sorts of imagination that look to, at least sometimes, be morally evaluable. I also give reasons to think that some dreams are, given that dreams are imaginative for the purposes of this paper, these sorts of imagination. I discuss visualisation, fantasy and pretend-play. All of these are types of imagination, and all can lead to systematic consequences. I argue that some dreams

⁴²⁸ In both my chapter and Cowan's paper, we assume the orthodoxy true. This is obviously not the case for this chapter.

⁴²⁹ Maybe most, and certainly, including SAD externalism.

⁴³⁰ For an example of an evaluable character trait, someone could imagine a careless person who never actually causes anyone harm. Nonetheless, carelessness is systematically connected to the bad.

⁴³¹ Cowan (2020: 10)

could be considered, by a proponent of the imagination view, instances of visualisation, fantasy and pretend-play.

Visualisation

I believe it is reasonable to think that non-lucid dreams could be playing the same role as visualisation. I understand visualisation as targeted imagination that has you imagine some tasks with the goal of being successful at that task. A waking example of visualisation could be someone imagining throwing a basketball ball from the three-point line.⁴³² This person imagines how they would throw the ball and imagines themselves getting better at it. Studies have shown that visualising constitutes a form of practice and reaps the benefits of practicing: people get better at tasks they visualise themselves doing even if they do not practice doing the task itself. For example, Meyers and Schleser found visualisation increased the performance of athletes in their case study by over 20% with a basketball player's strongest games before visualisation being as bad as their weakest games after visualisation.⁴³³

Visualisation is often used in the realm of sports, diet and finance but visualisation could be of moral interest to the evaluational externalist. We know that visualisation of certain tasks leads to improve performance at certain tasks. Improved performance, at least in some contexts, seems morally praiseworthy: take, for instance, a surgeon who has a difficult surgery to perform in a week. While not practicing, he visualises each step of the surgery. This visualisation increases his chance of success. By externalist lights, the surgeon is doing something good when they visualise the surgery.

Are dreams ever, plausibly, instances of visualisation? There have been studies involving lucid-dreams being used to reap the same rewards as non-dream visualisation. For an example of such a study, see Erlacher and Shdredl.⁴³⁴ In this study, participants were asked to practice simple motor tasks, for example tossing a coin into a cup, while lucidly dreaming. These people, who practiced while dreaming, improved in being able to do so while awake. If dreams, then, are imaginative then this seems a straightforward case of visualising some task and improving in it.

It is a tenuous move to make to use of lucid dream studies to draw conclusions about the nature of non-lucid dreams, but so long as non-lucid dreams could be of the same type of event as their lucid counterparts then a token-type argument still holds. It seems, at least to me, that they are the same 'sort' of event. More importantly, it seems that many proponents of the imagination theory support their ontology by appealing to evidence garnered from lucid dreams. For example, Ichikawa writes:

The second reason in favor of the suggestion that dream experiences are subject to the will is that sometimes, some people have lucid dreams — dreams in which the dreamer, aware that she is

⁴³² This sort of visualisation is sometimes called 'mental practice.' See Predoiu et al (for an example of this terminology being used.

⁴³³ Meyers & Schleser (1980: 70)

⁴³⁴ Erlacher & Shdredl (2007)

dreaming, takes active and conscious control over the content of her dream. Percepts and beliefs are never under our active control, so the orthodox model can certainly not describe lucid dreaming; the imagination model fits the experience well. Insofar as lucid dreaming is similar in character to non-lucid dreaming, this provides reason to adopt the imagination model for dreaming in general. In non-lucid dreaming, dreamers create their dreams without recognizing their own agency. In lucid dreaming, dreamers recognize that they are in control of their dream experiences, and are able consciously to direct their dreams.⁴³⁵

Here, Ichikawa defends that non-lucid dreams are subject to the will by appealing to the nature of lucid dreams. Ichikawa, and other proponents of the imagination theory, could not appeal to this support for their ontology of dreaming while denying other evidence taken from lucid dreaming.⁴³⁶ Because of all this the move, therefore, likely has more rhetorical bite against those who take inferences from lucid dreaming to support their view on non-lucid dreaming.

So, if non-lucid dreams are imaginative, it looks plausible that some non-lucid dreams are instances of visualisation. This conclusion requires that one can take information gained from lucid dreams and apply that to non-lucid dreams. This move is likely dubious but given that it is a move that proponents of the imagination theory have done before I believe this is harder for them to counter.

Still, someone might think that what is required for visualisation is absent from non-lucid dreams. There are questions to be raised about if the conditions for successful visualisation are ever met.⁴³⁷ However, this might not matter: so long as it is *conceptually* possible that the dream morality thesis obtains then some, namely Driver, will think that the views leading to it are tarnished. However, it is more clear that dreams (given the imagination view) could be instances of fantasy.

Fantasy

What of other sorts of imagination? Little work has been done on the effects of imagination although intuitively it seems that certain imagination can be linked to certain consequences. This seems especially true for fantasy. I define fantasy as imagining some event and feeling pleasure towards that imagining. I argue that some fantasies play an important causal role in action. Recall the fantasy that Smuts discusses in his paper: a wife is working with her personal fitness coach and pleasurably imagines having sex with them.⁴³⁸ Her husband is hurt by this and part of his hurt, intuitively, seems based in the idea that if she pleasurably enjoys imagining having sex with someone else, we have some reason to think she is more

⁴³⁵ Ichikawa (2009: 116)

⁴³⁶ As discussed in a future chapter, Ichikawa thinks dream morality is extremely implausible so I see him as someone who wishes to avoid endorsing it.

⁴³⁷ For instance, someone might think dreamers systematically lack agency in dreams. See this thesis' discussion of Rosen.

⁴³⁸ Smuts (2016: 4)

likely to have sex with someone else. This intuition seems widespread when we consider other fantasies: part of why someone fantasising that they hurt children; or abuse animals; or chasing women looks morally bad is because we seem to think they might *actually* do it. Or, they seem more likely to do it than someone who does not have these fantasies.

Plausibly, some fantasies would be of moral import to the externalist so long as this intuitive claim – that fantasy can lead to consequence – is true. I do not wish to defend the intuition, but it does seem strongly held. Given that fantasies are some imagined content that is responded to with pleasure, then some dreams are obviously fantasies. So long as fantasies are systematically connected to action, then even if it were the case that some dreams were fantasies it would not need to be true that any dream leads to consequences. In fact, so long as it is the case that *some* subset of fantasies are systematically connected to action and dreams can be instances of that subset, then dream morality is on the menu. An example of this could be another murderer case: if it were the case that fantasy of murdering people was linked, in some way, to murdering them then plausibly dreams fantasy could be morally problematic.

Again, the conclusion here is suggestive and modest. I am not saying that externalists *must* hold that all fantasies are motivational or lead to outcome.⁴³⁹ Instead, some externalists could plausibly hold that some types of fantasies are morally evaluable because they could be connected to action in a sufficiently systematic way. So long as some dreams are fantasies, they look to inherit their wrongdoing through that even if the empirical evidence used to prove dreams have consequences is insufficient.

Other Imaginative States

In a previous chapter, I argued that when considering the ethics of imagination, we ought to consider more than just the ethics of imagination. I argued that imagination can be morally evaluated so long as it is coupled with some inappropriate response.⁴⁴⁰ Some fantasies are an example of this and some are not: to fantasize about hurting children is wrong because to imagine hurting children and feeling pleasure seems wrong. By externalist lights, it looks wrong because there is a presumption that one might harm children if they have these fantasies.⁴⁴¹ This might be the case, but is likely only the case for agents with specific characters. However, it looks to me that other instances of imagination might be the proper object of moral evaluation to the externalist. Take a homophobic bigot who imagines a gay couple kissing. He feels a strong disgust. By externalist lights, this is plausibly wrong because this disgust could lead to the production of some bad ends. For instance, voting against gay rights.

Again, I do not want to defend this beyond appealing to common sense accounts of motivation and intuitions about wrongdoing. However, it still seems to me that if someone had frequent dreams with

⁴³⁹ In fact, many fantasies are not. See chapter three's discussion on autonomous versus surrogate.

⁴⁴⁰ I argued this under the presumption that internalism was true.

⁴⁴¹ Other fantasies are relatively harmless: for instance fantasizing about having hot sex with your partner after a long day of work is morally innocuous because having hot sex with your partner is an amoral consequence.

homosexual content that they always met with disgust we would intuitively believe them to be doing something wrong, and if we were externalists we might justify this intuition by saying these dreams are playing some causal role in their life that leads to some bad.

Pretend-Play

In the previous chapter, I discussed how pretend-play might be morally assessable because of the internal states that motivate our desire to play the parts we do. For example, Amy Kind writes that her child pretending to be a terrible monster that bites people looks dubious because the desire to be a thing that bites people looks dubious. Our analysis of pretend-play gives externalism is far more straightforward: sometimes, pretend-play has consequences! In the example above, the consequence of someone acting as a terrible monster is that they bite people.

Is it ever the case that dreams are instances of pretend-play? Plausibly so. For instance, one might dream that they are doing things and saying things that they would never do in waking life and in such a way that suggests they are playing the character of the dream protagonist. But it seems like playing *some* characters might be systematically linked to harm. Kind has good reason, namely that she has been or was about to get bitten, to believe that someone roleplaying as a biting monster systematically causes harm.

Objection 1: the Character Intuition

The first objection I predict is that these are not instances of dream morality because they are reflections of an agent's character⁴⁴². For the cases of fantasy, as an example, the externalist⁴⁴³ wishing to avoid dream morality could say that the reason we have these intuitive worries about their horrible fantasies because it reflects some fault in their character and not because it is linked to action or consequence. So, the imagination of the dreamer is not morally evaluable but their character is.

This, I believe, is a difficult position to hold for all non-lucid dreams. Many dreams seem remarkably out of character. Often times, people report that their dream runs *opposite* to their character: think of an eternally faithful partner who has a cheating dream. So, it seems possible that someone could have an imaginative experience that does not reflect their character *but* is still wrong. I consider one response.

Someone could respond that the fact that these imaginative experiences run contrary to character is reason to think they do not have systematic consequences. To respond with this seems rhetorically impotent⁴⁴⁴. Although curt, I see no reason to think this is true. It is also unclear that it matters, given our understanding of what it means for something to have systematic consequences: systematic consequences are those consequences we think are reasonable to expect from an action or trait. So, it seems plausible

⁴⁴² I discuss the character intuition in more detail elsewhere.

⁴⁴³ Who is also a proponent of the imagination view of dreaming.

⁴⁴⁴ Like some other debates in philosophy, it could be that this boils down to a fight over intuitions.

that a dream could tell us nothing about the person's character and could be causally inert, but still evaluable because we expect these dreams to lead to some sort of harm. For example, even the externalist will likely say that causally inert dreams about harming children look wrong because those *sorts* of dreams across a variety of people lead to harm.

Objection Two: A Different Kind of Imagination

Another avenue away from dream morality is to say that this token-type argument does not work because dreams are – while imaginative – *sui generis*. By this, I mean a proponent of the imagination theory of dreams could say that dreams are imaginative but that they are never any sort of imagination *other than* dreams.

The 'cost' of this move is immense since taking the position that dreams are *sui generis* imaginative experience excludes the position from commonplace support. For instance, Stone argues that taxonomising dreams as of the same kind as commonplace mental states (such as fantasy, daydreaming, etc) rather than something rare like hallucination provides a "more unified account of mental life."⁴⁴⁵ There is also a disentangling problem. Many philosophers⁴⁴⁶ have appealed to common facts about other sorts of imagination and, at least purportedly, have shown the similarities these states have with dreaming. They infer from this that dreams are more likely to be imaginative than hallucinatory. An example of this happening is using the lucid dream studies about practicing a motor skill to infer that, since imagination has a similar effect, that dreams are imaginative. However, it seems to me that this lucid dream is saying that dreams can be instances of visualisation. If dreams are *sui generis*, then they are never instances of visualisation since they can only be instances of dreaming. But if dreams are *sui generis* imaginative experiences, then we have to explain why they sometimes have the functional role of visualisation. I have called this the disentangling problem for two reasons: the first reason is that it is hard to decide what of the existing evidence used by proponents of the imagination theory is available to a proponent of the *sui generis* imaginative account. The second issue is that it is unclear what dreams actually *are* if they are *sui generis* imaginative experiences. Proponents of the view must disentangle dreams from other imaginative states and clearly mark out dreams as their own event. While *sui generis* accounts exist⁴⁴⁷, none of this ilk do.

The second issue I wish to raise against this objection is that it might not escape dream morality anyway. It seems plausible that even if dreams are *sui generis* imaginative experiences, they might be the sort that are systematically connected to the production of the good and the bad. Elsewhere I have

⁴⁴⁵ See both Stone (1984) and Windt (2021) for this line of thought.

⁴⁴⁶ See Ichikawa (2009) for a prominent example.

⁴⁴⁷ For instance, see Rosen (2018).

discussed the intuitive cases where we might think that if someone has certain dreams that they might act a certain way. That intuition persists regardless of dream ontology. A proponent of an imaginative sui generis account must explain these intuitions. Similarly, even if it is the case that dreams are never instances of, for example, visualisation it is still true that practicing a task in dreams is connected to an improvement in the ability to perform that task while awake. As I argued earlier, so long as lucid-dreams are the same sort of experience as non-lucid dreams we have good reason to think dream morality is possible given the imagination theory. This looks to still be true, even if the theory is a sui generis imagination theory.

Conclusion

In this short chapter, I have argued that replacing the orthodox view of dreaming and internalism with the imagination view and externalism is (probably) not sufficient to avoid dream morality. I began by reintroducing the key concepts and the standard argument. I then discussed two avenues to dream morality given the altered standard argument: whether dreams have ‘direct’ consequences and whether dreams might inherit their moral accessibility by being a token of some other type of action. I argued that, although better compared to the last time it was seen in this thesis, that the argument that dreams have direct consequences is unsuccessful. However, I argued that the token-type argument likely works. I gave some examples of the sort of morally assessable tokens dreams might be a type of: visualisation, fantasy, and imaginative states coupled with inappropriate responses. I ended by considering two objections: the character intuition objection and the sui-generis objection. Both, I argued, fail.

Chapter 9 Against the Double Life Problem and Towards Plausibility

In this last chapter of my thesis, I wish to do two things. Firstly, this chapter will summarise some of the claims I have made and explain how I have defended them. I then take these explanations and test them against the ‘implausibility thesis’. Cowan gives the implausibility thesis as “Dream Morality is highly implausible.”⁴⁴⁸ Given the content discussed in the rest of the thesis, I argue against the implausibility thesis. I discuss if the implausibility thesis is intuitive, then respond to Driver’s support of the double life by arguing that dream morality is uncommon and that the cases that Driver is most worried about are not cases we ought to be worried about.

What it takes for the dream morality thesis to be implausible varies. As a reminder, the dream morality thesis is:

Sometimes, perhaps only rarely, what we do in non-lucid dreams is the proper object of moral assessment as wrong, right, vicious, virtuous, blameworthy, or praiseworthy.⁴⁴⁹

Some take dream morality to be implausible only if blame and praise are involved. For example, Sosa only discusses dream morality as implausible if dream morality aims at praise and blame. Contra Sosa, Driver believes that any sort of dream morality looks implausible; dream wrongness is still implausible for Driver. There is also the question of frequency: some might think dream morality is only implausible if it is commonplace whereas others might think a single instance of dream morality is enough to render it absurd. I discuss both the level of moral evaluation and the frequency later in an attempt to neuter the implausibility thesis. There are two ways in which I have seen the implausibility thesis discussed. The first is to treat it as a powerfully intuitive; as a point of data that needs explanation. The second is more positive: dream morality is implausible because of the double-life argument. I begin by discussing the intuition claim.

Do People Find the Implausibility Thesis Intuitive?

Here, I discuss two accounts: Sosa’s and Driver’s. Both treat dream implausibility as a given. Sosa approaches dream morality in a similar way to Driver in that he sets out how a particular view’s leading to dream morality is a reason for abandoning it since dream morality is absurd. Specifically, he sees dream morality as being a question of blame. He asks: “is dreaming perhaps like being drunk or drugged?”⁴⁵⁰ He continues no: it cannot be! It is because, at least for Sosa, that these conditions would only “lighten responsibility”⁴⁵¹ and it is not the case that we bear less responsibility for “what happens in

⁴⁴⁸ Cowan (2021: 7)

⁴⁴⁹ Cowan (2021: 2)

⁴⁵⁰ Sosa (2005: 9)

⁴⁵¹ Sosa (2005: 9)

one's dream"⁴⁵² but rather that "one is not responsible"⁴⁵³ at all! Sosa seems ambivalent on whether dreaming is like being drunk or drugged since these are not sufficient to void the no special condition thesis.⁴⁵⁴ Instead, Sosa treats the implausibility thesis as something that has 'near-zero' plausibility.

This is similar to, as we have seen already in the thesis, how Driver approaches dream morality as something damaging. Driver's scope is different from Sosa's: where Sosa is discussing blameworthiness Driver is discussing *any* sort of moral evaluation. Briefly, Driver posits that the best explanation for why dream morality *is* implausible is because evaluational externalism is true. Again, the implausibility of dream morality is taken as given.

Cowan explains that these philosophers are identifying an intuitive datum: they view dream morality *as* implausible and proffer explanations as to why it is the case that dream morality is implausible. It is, then, taken as a given by the people we have discussed, that dream morality is implausible. However, while this view is dominant now, historical discussions of dream morality do not treat it as implausible.

I want to combat this claim by looking at philosophers and laypeople who think that dream morality is something worthy of concern and, by proxy, do not seem to think it is an implausible datum that requires explanation.

I now wish to discuss some philosophers who take dream morality as plausible⁴⁵⁵.⁴⁵⁶ I want to be clear: my goal is not to defend their views on dream morality or their views on moral evaluation. Instead, I am resisting the idea that the implausibility thesis is powerfully intuitive.

It is often the case that when someone wakes up from a dream, they feel guilt or shame for what they had done in the dream. Recall that Saint Augustine was upset that he was having sex in his dreams despite firmly believing that abstinence was morally required. He continues in a later passage of *Confessions*:

⁴⁵² Sosa (2005: 10)

⁴⁵³ Sosa (2005: 10)

⁴⁵⁴ The no special condition thesis is that "non-lucid dreamers are not always in a special condition rendering them immune to moral assessment." (Cowan 2021: 5)

⁴⁵⁵ Not all these philosophers think the dream morality thesis obtains, but they do not treat the prospect as ridiculous.

⁴⁵⁶ More than these have discussed dream morality, but in different ways than Sosa and Driver. Freud, for instance, seems to think that dreams are something we should be held morally accountable for but that is because he sees dreams as expressions of wishes. Hildebrandt thinks we have 'a moral sense' in dreams although this is consistent with the dream morality thesis being false. Scholz thinks dreams might reflect character, but as we have seen with Driver, this is saying that dreams may play an epistemic function of giving us information about ourselves and others. This, though, is distinct from dream morality. These three all treat dream morality as plausible (and in Freud's case even a given), although their understanding of dream morality is different from ours.

The power of your hand, O God Almighty, is indeed great enough to cure all diseases of my soul... By your grace [my soul] will no longer commit in sleep these **shameful, unclean acts** inspired by sensual images...^{457 458}

While Augustine eventually concludes that dream morality is not possible (the gulf between one's waking self and one's dream self are too large for one dream morality according to Augustine), it is something that he takes seriously!⁴⁵⁹

The second example I wish to come from Mann. Mann takes some reasonable assumptions (such as evaluational internalism and that dreams are constituted by experiences) and writes that Augustine might face a double jeopardy. Mann writes:

Not only do we formulate evil intentions for which we are responsible in our sinful dreams, but we also may be responsible for creating the scenarios in which we formulate these intentions.⁴⁶⁰
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Again, Mann takes dream morality fairly seriously. He also argues that Augustine is committed to dream morality even if we tinker with features of his views.

The third, and last account, comes from Matthews. While Matthew confesses that most of us suppose that we are not morally responsible for our dreams, he still asks: "why not?". He intends this as an open question and treats it as such. Matthews runs through three reasons to think that we might avoid dream morality: the dream self is not the dreamer; the dream self does not do anything that "really" happens; and you cannot refrain from what you do in dreams.⁴⁶² Mann writes that we plausibly are, at least sometimes, identical to the dream self. Even if we were not, however, it would not necessarily follow that we would not be responsible for that dream self as one might be responsible for an avatar. While what we do in the dream might not *really* happen, the psychological states (intentions, desires, emotions) seem real and that is sufficient for moral evaluation and finally Mann, citing Descartes, believes we can exercise our will in dreams.

In sum, dream morality is not universally treated as implausible among philosophers. Those who investigate it thoroughly often, as evidenced by these cases, conclude that dream morality is entailed by plausible views. Even if some philosophers, like Augustine, conclude that dream morality is not possible they do not seem to hold it as ridiculous.

⁴⁵⁷ Augustine (1991, 30: X)

⁴⁵⁸ My added emphasis.

⁴⁵⁹ One reading of Augustine his views and experiences point towards dream morality, but he searches for reasons to morally exculpate himself because dream morality looks implausible. I think, and Mann looks to agree, reading is that Augustine accepts the conclusion as *unpalatable* because it would mean that he is doing wrong more often than he was previous.

⁴⁶⁰ Mann (1983: 383)

⁴⁶¹ This is similar to what I have said in the chapter on the no special condition thesis, at least in spirit. Whereas I have said we are responsible for the narratives in which we formulate these intentions, I mean that we might be able to avoid them. Mann is thinking more laterally: that we form intentions (or at least consent) to create these narratives while dreaming.

⁴⁶² Matthews (1981: 48-49)

Dream morality is not taken to be implausible (or at least, not so implausible that it can be weaponized in the way Driver does) by many non-philosophers. It is impossible to get concrete figures, however a quick browse of popular internet forums gives produces lots of examples of people being concerned about dream morality. Here are some examples taken from the public access question and answer website Quora:

I have dreams that make me feel guilty all the time...I used to have chronic dreams of cheating on my boyfriend. In the dreams, it seemed like I was going through the motions, like I didn't even have an attraction or a reason to be cheating, but I vividly felt the guilt the entire time.⁴⁶³

and

Yes, in fact. I have awoken from *numerous* dreams with severe feelings of guilt.⁴⁶⁴

and

It's normal to feeling guilty when dreaming or fantasizing about someone other than your lover. But, believe it or not, it's also normal for people to have dreams about other people.⁴⁶⁵

All of this is compatible with the denial of dream morality since one can merely reply that the guilt is irrational. At least for some of these cases, it is probably true that these people are looking for reasons as to why they feel guilty when they believe they should not. But given the frequency, many seem to think that they *might be* doing something wrong in their dreams.

A group of people that I have noticed who seem especially worried about dream morality, likely because of their moral commitments and evaluational internalism, are Catholics. Here is an example which I have already featured in the thesis, but one that I think is very interesting:

Well last night I had another wet dream, but this one was different from others ... I began to watch pornography and masturbate. In the dream, I knew it was wrong, thought about it, and consented to continue masturbating until I ejaculated. At that moment, in the dream, I felt the Holy Spirit leave me. In the dream, I immediately felt horrible and started to pray for forgiveness, and that's when I woke up.⁴⁶⁶

Here, the question of *who* is being wronged is entertained. JohnTheRevelator seems to think he is wronging God. Other Catholics⁴⁶⁷ are worried that you are hurting yourself in some way. In non-Catholic

⁴⁶³ AJ Meunier (2020), posted on Quora "Do Dreams Ever Make You Feel Guilty?"

⁴⁶⁴ Alan Taylor (2019), posted on Quora "Do Dreams Ever Make you Feel Guilty?"

⁴⁶⁵ Luis Gomez (2017), posted on Quora "Should I Feel Guilty of Dreaming about Being Intimate with Others Who Are Not My Current Partner?"

⁴⁶⁶ Johntherevelator (2011), post on "Wet Dreams – Mortal Sin?"

⁴⁶⁷ This is also very prevalent in Catholic anti-gay-sex literature.

examples, one might think that you are wronging your partner by cheating on them in the dream. While this is possibly wrong, my point persists: people do not universally (perhaps even commonly) understand dream morality as implausible.

In this section, I have entertained the thought that dream morality might not be this powerfully intuitive implausibility. In the next section, I address Driver's main argument against the plausibility of dream morality. I use this as a lens to callback to some of the arguments I have made throughout the thesis.

The Double-Life Problem

In this section, I outline the double-life problem. I explain it broadly and then highlight some of the specifics that Driver highlights. Driver explains that a main motivator for the implausibility thesis is the double life problem.⁴⁶⁸ She writes:

It is important at this point to highlight yet another putative absurdity. If I dream that I act rightly – for example, I dream that I write out a check to Oxfam, or I dream that I was nice and helped my neighbor clean her garbage, do I get any credit for that? It seems not! Indeed, if I just dream that I do good deeds and don't follow through, that seems worse than simply not doing the good deed. For example, if we believe that we have imperfect duties of beneficence, this suggests that one has a quota of beneficence to fulfil. It seems outrageous to suggest that I could fulfil my quota of good willings through dreams. We can certainly imagine someone who, when dreaming is an altruist, when awake, however, is the paradigm of a misanthrope. The morally quality of this person's life is not redeemed through her dreams.⁴⁶⁹

More broadly, Driver is worried that someone's morally praiseworthy waking life could be undone by their dream life and, conversely, that someone's morally vicious life is made transformed into a good life by their ceaseless good-doing in dreams. The double-life problem, as I have given it, does not support the sort of implausibility Driver aims at: Driver believes that (1) dream morality is empirically implausible⁴⁷⁰ and (2) that even one instance of dream morality is implausible even if only one instance of dream morality ever occurs. The double-life problem is that one can do *enough* praiseworthy or blameworthy in their dreams to effect the totality of how we would judge them; eg. a good person could be 'made' a bad person because of their dreams. I think this is easier to understand through analogy: the double-life problem is concerned about our moral scales. The worry is that, when awake, we place most of our weights to either the good side or the bad side of the scale. However, when we dream, we might be

⁴⁶⁸ The term "double life problem" is my own.

⁴⁶⁹ Driver (2007: 8)

⁴⁷⁰ As in: implausible given how dreams are in the real world. This squares with Driver's actualism. For more on actualism, see chapter two of this thesis focused on Driver's paper.

placing tokens on the opposite side! The worry, then, is that the balance of our scales might be tipped against how we often act while awake. I now see if, given what I have said in previous chapters, the double-life problem is a problem at all.

There are multiple ways to dispute the double-life problem. I have focused on two: first, I discuss frequency and secondly I discuss the mode of moral evaluation. I also briefly discuss the idea that we might fulfill our duties in our dreams.

When discussing the no special condition thesis, I argued that agents are not always immune to moral assessment. However, they are *most of the time!* I have argued that dream morality is more common than might have previously been thought, it is not going to be the case that very time we appear to do something wrong in dreams we are responsible for it: agents will routinely fail to be morally competent, or aware, or even themselves.

A proponent of Driver may retort that this is inaccurate: it seems that, while dreaming, we often seem to meet these requirements. The proponent could say that we seem to have moral beliefs; we seem to want to want to do the things we do in dreams; and so on. However, moral beliefs and that psychological web of desires are tied to character: if you, rather suddenly, exhibit a change in moral beliefs and a change in desires then we have good reason to think that is *no longer you!* This means the agent would escape moral culpability: they would be immune from moral assessment.

Here is an account of psychological continuity that would, if true, support my point. Parfit explains that someone is the same person under these conditions:

*X at t_1 is the same person as Y at t_2 if and only if X is uniquely psychologically continuous with Y, where psychological continuity consists in overlapping chains of strong psychological connectedness, itself consisting in significant numbers of direct psychological connections like memories, intentions, beliefs/goals/desires, and similarity of character.*⁴⁷¹

So, for Parfit, what matters is that a ‘critical mass’ of internal states persist from moment to moment. Locke gives a famous case of a man who is a teenager, then a soldier and then a general. The general need not be ‘immediately’ psychologically connected to the soldier or the teenager but so long as there is a linked chain between them then they are the same person. I assume this account is correct for the sake of argument but also so as not to exceed the scope of this paper.

In a previous chapter, I explain how dreamers might be, at least sometimes, psychologically continuous with their waking selves. However, we might think that moral beliefs are different from other beliefs. Moral beliefs seem connected to character in important way: they seem dependent, or contingent,

⁴⁷¹ Parfit (1984: 207)

or otherwise integrated with, affect, motivation, other beliefs, other desires. More broadly, they seem to be intimately connected with our character.⁴⁷² Here is an example to illustrate: if Samantha were to change her mind on the ethics of cheating one would be shocked to here that she had changed no other features of her psychological make-up. It seems likely that, in order to find something permissible that she previous did not, that her goals might have changed; other beliefs might have changed (for instance, about the wrong making features of cheating); her desires might have changed. Colloquially, it makes sense to say that someone with different moral beliefs appears as a different person: Donald Draper⁴⁷³ habitually cheats on his wife. A Donald Draper who does not see this as permissible seems radically different from the Donald Draper we see.

Psychological difference between someone at t_1 and t_2 is not enough to make them different people so long as there is a chained of psychological similarities between them. But the transition between the person in the dream and the awake person is fast. Not only does it seem plausible that we have a series of different psychological constituent features, but they seem to change radically. By Parfit's account, this would break the chain.

The objection I foresee to such a line is that agents could still hold moral beliefs, but now hold them dispositionally and are unaware of them.

This systematically undermines the double-life problem because agents cannot be held accountable for what they do in their dreams *if* those actions differ massively from their waking life! The idea of someone whose virtuous and pure life is undone by what they do in dreams is gone since, in order for them to be accountable for those waking actions, it must be the case that those actions are connected to their waking psychology in appropriate ways.

This attacks the double-life problem in a specific way: given what I have said about moral responsibility and the no special condition thesis, agents would only be committing dream morality (or dream immorality) if what they did in those dreams was actually aligned to their psychological states.

There are caveats to my position, but they would only make dream morality rarer. For example, someone might argue that dreamers need to consent to dreaming in order to be culpable. In the previous chapter, I argued that dreamers, at least sometimes, choose to dream knowing that there is a good

⁴⁷² Cowan (2020) ties moral judgement to character. This is one example of someone who thinks they are connected.

⁴⁷³ Donald Draper is a character in the TV show "Mad Men".

chance⁴⁷⁴ that they will do something morally wrong. I argued that this because the state that dreamers are in would render them immune to moral assessment⁴⁷⁵ had they not consented or anticipated it.

In addition, dreamers rarely do things that they would be morally assessed for given the no special condition thesis. I now talk about this briefly given internalism and then externalism. First, internalism. As a reminder, internalists believe “the moral quality of a person’s agency, what they do, is fully determined by factors that are internal to that agency.”⁴⁷⁶ Dream morality looks possible but uncommon given internalism. For instance, it is not sufficient to *merely* have a fantasy about cheating on one’s partner. I argued that it must be part of the fantasy that one is cheating. If we assume dream orthodoxy rather than the imagination view, then it is not sufficient to have the intention to have sex, but you need the intention to cheat on your partner. All things considered; these are rare! And instances of dream morality will be made all the rarer since the no special condition thesis must be true *and* agents must have done something wrong.

Contra Driver’s general argument from *Dream Immorality*, dream morality looks to be potentially more common given externalism but still rare. As a reminder, externalists believe “the moral quality of a person’s agency, what they do, is fully determined by factors that are external to their agency.”⁴⁷⁷ There are two sorts of externalism that this thesis has discussed: naïve and systematic. Naïve externalism, I have argued, avoids dream morality. Naïve externalism, which I described as the view where all that matters are the consequences of an agent’s actions, can be defended from dream morality. I pointed to Cowan’s reliance on lucid dream studies as well as general methodological worries and a misunderstanding of where the wrongdoing occurs in problem cases. So, the naïve externalist is likely uncommitted to the dream morality thesis. Yet, the naïve externalist faces a bigger worry: moral luck! Moral luck is, as I argued in the chapter, a horrifically large bullet to bite. To avoid this, most externalists add systematism to their views. However, systematist externalists are committed to dream morality. But how often would dream morality occur, given systematic externalism? Plausibly slightly more often than internalism: take the cheating case again. Given that systematic action seems to be “trying to have sex with someone who isn’t your partner” then this does not seem to care if you have forgotten that you have a partner or that you never intend to cheat on your partner. Even if the systematist wants to differentiate these cases, then dream morality is at least as common as it is with internalism.⁴⁷⁸ When it comes to the imagination view, it seems the SAD⁴⁷⁹ externalists may be committed to dream morality, but this seems uncommon.

⁴⁷⁴ What constitutes a ‘good chance’ is difficult to explain. I appealed to similar cases of alcohol consumption: even if someone only rarely acts violently or improperly when drunk, that still seems like a ‘good enough chance’ and so they should avoid alcohol.

⁴⁷⁵ See Hobson, Clark, Nir & Tononi and Rosen for more on this. I explain this in richer depth in my chapter on the no special condition thesis.

⁴⁷⁶ Cowan (2021: 2)

⁴⁷⁷ Cowan (2021: 10)

⁴⁷⁸ This revelation is specifically damaging to Driver’s argument. See Chapter 2 for more.

⁴⁷⁹ SAD stands for Systematic, Actualist and Direct. This is explored richly in Chapter 2.

In brief, dream morality looks uncommon. What I have explained here would rule out the following sort of case: A devoted husband finds the thought of having an affair morally repugnant. Despite this, he has a dream where he has an affair. He, while dreaming, believes that an affair is a grand idea. He now sees it as morally permissible. Even assuming he meets the awareness conditions and the competency conditions required for moral responsibility, it could be the case that the break in psychological continuity means that he is no longer responsible since that is no longer him. These are the cases, too, that one imagines that Driver finds most troubling.

It is important to note the differences in possible evaluation: it may be implausible for dreamers to be blameworthy or praiseworthy for all instances of dream morality, but dreamers would only be blameworthy or praiseworthy for their actions if they consent to them or can reasonably anticipate them while not taking steps to avoid them (and know such steps exist and can be reasonably expected of an agent to pursue).⁴⁸⁰ Cases like this are uncommon even though I have defended that they are more common than other philosophers, namely Cowan, think they are. There are other sorts of evaluation: possibly, dreamers are capable of doing blameless wrongdoing or praiseless right doing. For instance, an agent might knowingly cheat on their partner in a dream but as a one-off. If we assume internalism and dream orthodoxy, then they have done something wrong. But since this dream was a one-off, we might think they could not have reasonably expected it and so it seems cruel to blame them for not taking steps to prevent it. They have still done something wrong, but blame looks to be inappropriate. Alternatively, Smuts carves out conceptual space for what he calls ‘disesteem’ which he distinguishes from blame. Smuts writes:

The distinction I have in mind does not have a settled nomenclature in the literature. Sometimes it is mentioned as the distinction between responsibility and attributability. The nomenclature is unimportant, but the distinction is crucial. Blame requires robust moral responsibility; disesteem requires something much weaker.⁴⁸¹

Smuts continues by saying when disesteem seems appropriate:

We attribute some kind of undesirable attitude to the person. Typically, we don't think that people should be punished for their lack of concern. Few are fully culpable for their character. But many think that it is a flaw to be cold-hearted.⁴⁸²

Finally, Smuts concludes:

⁴⁸⁰ See Chapter 6 for a more complete discussion of this.

⁴⁸¹ Smuts (2015: 3)

⁴⁸² Smuts (2015: 3)

We merely need to think that an undesirable attitude is in some way representative of the person, that they lack an excuse, such as: "I was drunk" [for disesteem to be appropriate.]⁴⁸³

While it is unclear that this is *actually* getting at the distinction between attribution and moral responsibility, what is clear is that Smuts seems to think there are things – either actions or traits – that are beyond our control; that are representative of our character in some way; and that are bad but are not fully worthy of blame. Dream acts, or fantasies, seem like good candidates for disesteem given Smuts account.⁴⁸⁴

Let's return to character and psychological continuity with disesteem in mind. While one's character is more than their moral character, one could think that one cannot commit an act of dream morality if that action does not align with their existent moral character because that is *someone else* committing that immoral⁴⁸⁵ action. Smuts does not say that this is the reason why someone's moral character is tied to whether they are worthy of disesteem, but it's one plausible account and it restricts the amount of dream morality cases further.

In fact, this line would solve one intuitive motivator of double-life problem. It could not be the case that someone's moral waking life is opposed by a fundamentally immoral dreaming life since the moral character of the person in the waking life is different from the moral character of the person in the sleeping life.⁴⁸⁶ It is sufficient to mark them as different agents!

A proponent of the implausibility thesis might persist: what about a case where a few, or even one, instance of dream morality tips the moral scales? I believe that biting the bullet on this is appropriate. The case that the proponent is bringing up here is someone whose waking life is a near-equal parts good and bad. However, while dreaming, they do something that is good or bad and this tips the overall balance. But why is this problematic? It does not 'undo' or 'redeem' any of their waking acts. All it means is, all things considered, they now did more good than bad or more bad than good. Especially given what has been said about how moral, and psychological, character is required to persist. This seems, to me, a good explanation.

This might not be sufficient for Driver since Driver seems to think *any* instance of dream morality is enough to render dream morality implausible. So, Driver might not be convinced by the rarity of dream morality. But **why** does a single instance of dream morality seem so implausible? It is unclear to me why rare dream morality looks problematic. In fact, it seems as though dream morality might be, at least

⁴⁸³ Smuts (2015: 4) with my addition for clarity.

⁴⁸⁴ Disesteem is also discussed briefly in chapters 2 and 3.

⁴⁸⁵ Or moral.

⁴⁸⁶ This should be especially strong against Driver's virtue consequentialism since it seems like in order for the double life problem to be possible, given her view, an agent would need waking virtues and sleeping vices or vice versa.

conceptually, unavoidable without committing to even worse views like moral luck. Internalists seem committed; externalists seem committed; and both seem committed given the popular ontologies of dreaming.

So far, I have dealt with a general version of the double-life problem. Driver also raises the worry of agents fulfilling specific obligations while dreaming. She writes:

if we believe that we have imperfect duties of beneficence, this suggests that one has a quota of beneficence to fulfil. It seems outrageous to suggest that I could fulfil my quota of good willings through dreams.⁴⁸⁷

Is it really the case that dream morality suggests that you can fulfill your quota of beneficence? I take it that good willings are rarely ever sufficient for fulfilling a duty *especially* when you notice that your good willings had no real effects. For example, imagine that you donated money to a charity that turned out to be a scam: while your donations were likely good of you to do, it seems as though the ineffectiveness of them should spur you on to do more effective good. Conversely, we can imagine a Truman Show scenario where someone's good will is never *actually* effective. However, they have no reason to know this. In fact, when they do their due diligence, they find that it is likely their good willings *do* help; the ruse is so great that they are tricked into thinking their willings are effective. This person does seem to deserve praise. They do not, as the dreamer does, have a moment of clarity despite their best efforts. So, good willings seem intuitively right so long as we have reason to think they are successful. This is not the case with dreamers because dreamers wake up and realise their lack of success.

Dream Morality's Plausibility Beyond Driver's Double-Life Problem

I wish to, now, offer a tentative positive argument as to why we would think that dream morality, at least as it has been defended in the thesis, is not absurd or implausible. This builds upon work done in previous chapters, although manifesting the arguments here, explicitly, is important given how often people believe that endorsing dream morality is tantamount to a *reductio ad absurdum* against the positions that lead to the possibility and actuality of dream morality.

First, I discuss agency in reference to previous chapters. In particular, I want to offer positive reasons to think (1) that dreamers do, at least sometimes, express agency and (2) that they are responsible for that agency. I am arguing against two theses here: that dreams *always* involve moral passivity and that

⁴⁸⁷ Driver (2007: 9)

dreams are constituted by some *sui generis* actions.⁴⁸⁸ It is not needed that O'Shaughnessy's account is never right. Instead, it needs only to be the case that we have reason to doubt it *always* is.

Discussed earlier in thesis is O'Shaughnessy's view. Soteriou, while explaining O'Shaughnessy, writes:

we now understand dreaming as an essentially inactive phenomenon that involves seeming-to-be-active. According to that understanding, when one dreams, one undergoes passive episodes of imagining, at least some of which involve imagining oneself to be active.⁴⁸⁹

It can be useful to examine these claims through metaphor. Rather than dreaming by akin to navigating virtual reality⁴⁹⁰, it is more akin to being on a rollercoaster or watching a film. You are perhaps able to engage in some way⁴⁹¹

O'Shaughnessy gives three points to support this thesis. Since dreaming is non-conscious, he believes that dreaming lacks active thinking; perceptual sensitivity and ability to organize our mental future is absent. These, he insists, are essential for activity. There are reasons to think these are (1) either not required for agency or (2) not accurate descriptions of non-lucidly dreaming agents. But I forgo these for now.⁴⁹² Instead, I focus in on this claim of imagining to be active rather than merely being active.

Is it the case that dreamers are inactive? I give three reasons to think not. The first reason is dream reports and phenomenology. Here is a randomly selected dream from Atla:

I picture in my mind some things being gone, like the TV. But I go in and find almost everything gone - the shelves, even, that the TV was on - all wiped out, silently, while I was asleep. I'm sad, at a loss - I feel bereft and don't know what to do. It's as though this was visited on me as a kind of punishment or justice. I walk around a bit but mostly just look at where things have been, thoughts running through my mind, like, I wonder if I'll get the things back - what will I do to replace them - will I be able to replace them - I feel exposed, stripped, violated, taken. I go back into the other room.^{493 494}

Similarly, we can take a dream plucked from my own journal:

I am late for class and running quickly. I run through long corridors looking at door room numbers. I am increasingly anxious and frustrated and annoyed at myself for my lateness.

⁴⁸⁸ A third way of understanding this would be to see the tail of this chapter as offering positive arguments against claims that would be required for dream morality to be absurd (rather than merely wrong): that dreamers are never active or that dream actions are of the sort of action that is never morally assessable.

⁴⁸⁹ Soteriou (2020: 5330)

⁴⁹⁰ This metaphor has been used to describe the received, or Orthodox, view.

⁴⁹¹ It is unclear if O'Shaughnessy believes agents experience 'genuine' emotions or 'quasi' emotions.

⁴⁹² Recall some of the work done already in this thesis on 'problem solving in the dream', for instance.

⁴⁹³ Atla #116 (7/19/1986)

⁴⁹⁴ This is potentially a case of an agent trying to organise their mental future as they consider what to do next; "what will I do to replace them?"

Eventually, I give up and walk home. On the way home, I see an old friend and we chat. I cannot remember what about.

Prima facie, both reports involve activity. They report a first-person doing (moving between rooms, investigating shelves, running) as well as first person emotional responses. The phenomenology of dreaming, as supported by straight forward readings of dream reports, is that we are, at least some of the time, active.

O'Shaughnessy would retort that there is no activity but rather that 'seeming-to-be activity' he believes constitutes dreams. I retort that we put further pressure on O'Shaughnessy's view by examining cases of muscle atonia.

This has been mentioned elsewhere in the thesis, and so the recount here will be quick. Agents do, sometimes, enact their dream behaviour while asleep. Patients with REM sleep disorder often experience a loss of muscle atonia that dreamers usually experience. Muscle atonia usually happens during REM sleep when the brain signals to reduce muscle tone and so sleeping agents are less able to move. As Lydic puts it: "muscle atonia occurs when motoneurons are not generating action potentials."⁴⁹⁵ However, when muscle atonia is absent dreamers sometimes "show complex behaviors such as running or fighting off an attacker during REM sleep, and they often report dreams involving the same actions after awakening."⁴⁹⁶ To be clear: This is hard to square with passivity: it does not seem to be the case that dreamers are in a state of seeming to be active, but rather in a state where the success of their activity is curtailed by the state they find themselves in.

A proponent of O'Shaughnessy's might persist that one might still see this as an 'imagining to be active' although it is unclear how. This looks distinctive from the sort of imagining I take myself to do be doing while awake: it is not the case that, when I imagine, I experience muscle atonia nor is it the case that I, even in the most vivid of daydreams, act out those day dreams. At best, one might liken what dreamers are doing to pretend play. But this is still activity and not what O'Shaughnessy is arguing for.

It may be useful to look at how non-lucid dreams have been typified in contrast to non-lucid dreams. Lucid dreams are those dreams where the dreamer is aware that they are dreaming.⁴⁹⁷ While all that is required for a dream to be lucid is that one recognize that one is dreaming, there are often additional subsidiary features. One feature is "enhanced voluntary control, at least compared to non-lucid dreams."⁴⁹⁸

⁴⁹⁵ Lydic (2008, 1471)

⁴⁹⁶ Windt (2013, 6)

⁴⁹⁷ Accounts of lucid dreaming stretch back millennia. For modern descriptions see (Erlacher & Strumbry's 2020) and Rosen (2012)

⁴⁹⁸ Cowan (2022: 7)

It may be tempting, I believe, to draw the inference that since lucid dreams are marked by control, then we may infer that non-lucid dreams are marked by a *lack* of control. While neither O'Shaughnessy nor Soteriou make this inference, it is worth considering what the *practical* implications of this might be. Early in the thesis, I remark that non-lucid dreams, despite the moniker, are not dreams where dreamers lack agency. But if one were to commit to this, in the face of evidence, they also take on a theoretical burden. If lucid dreams were marked not as different in degree, but different in kind⁴⁹⁹, then much of the modern empirical work becomes void: studies on lucid dreams have been used to explore, through inference, non-lucid dreams.⁵⁰⁰ To give up this work might have grueling practical costs.

So far in this section, I have demotivated O'Shaughnessy's view in a few ways. I've given some reasons to believe that we are *not* passive while we dream and that we express agency. In particular, I pointed towards REM sleep disorder cases where agents engage in dream enactment behaviours. I also stressed that the way agents frequently report dreams is where they are doing, rather than seeming to do. I ended with a note by exploring an inference explained very early in the thesis and noting that, in light of much of the empirical work seen throughout the thesis, there might be a new cost to the potential dialectic.

In this next section, I want to introduce a functionalist 'challenge' to another potential objection that I believe one could say renders the prospect of dream morality absurd. I will explain this objection and problematize it, and hopefully doing so in a way that leaves open the prospect of a *sui generis* account while not undermining the work done throughout the thesis.

I understand the potential objection as follows: if dreams actions are *sui generis*, then we might have reason to believe that dream actions are the sort of actions for which one can never be held morally responsible.⁵⁰¹ First, a sketch of an existing *sui generis* account: Jennifer Windt proposes⁵⁰² that dreams are neither solely hallucinatory, solely imaginative or solely perceptual. Instead, they are closer to mind wandering which incorporates all three then "characterized by their spontaneous and dynamic character..." Windt continues that one virtue of her view is that it allows for many potential answers to questions of control, phenomenology, and so on while still leaning on the strengths of other popular ontologies.⁵⁰³ What one could say, although no one has, is that dream actions are *sui generis* as well, and are therefore just not the sort of thing that one could be morally assessed

⁴⁹⁹ There are reasons to think this would be unpopular, even given other dream ontologies. Remember that Ichikawa believes that we *could* control the narrative of non-lucid dreams it is just the case that we never do. It is the kind of thing that is under our control.

⁵⁰⁰ See Schadlich, M., Erlacher, D. & Schredl M. (2017) as an example.

⁵⁰¹ This argument does **not** exist in the literature. I am setting up this position so that I can argue that regardless of how we taxonomize dream action, it seems that there are morally salient features.

⁵⁰² Windt (2015)

⁵⁰³ Windt (2021)

for.⁵⁰⁴ I suggest the focus on our reason ought to be ‘success’, or the systematic lack of. To be clear: the reason one might have for thinking that *sui generis* dream actions are (1) *sui generis* and (2) morally innocuous is because the success conditions for a dream action are different than the success conditions for a waking action. Here is a contrasting case to explain. Let us say that an agent intends to drive their car from point A to point B. There is a litany of smaller actions that make up this action. They must get into their car, and start it, and successfully pilot it. Contrast this with a dream case: in order for one to have a successful dream action where they drive from point A to point B they are not required to leave their bed! The success conditions may also be based only on outcome; if one ‘forgets’ to turn their car on the dream it does not follow, always, that in the dream the car does not move. Dream actions, then, might be distinguished from waking actions by the fact that dream actions can be successful without one having any real-world consequence.

I want to offer a retort based on functionalism. I propose that the functional profile of dream actions, as evidenced, by these REM sleep disorder studies is enough to render them of moral interest *qua* actions⁵⁰⁵. My rebuttal, briefly, is that it could be the case that dream actions *are* *sui generis* because they have different success conditions, but that these different success conditions are in place in virtue of luck or happenstance unbeknownst to the agent.⁵⁰⁶

Now, I want to explain a functionalist account of dream actions. I take this view as ontologically neutral⁵⁰⁷ and there are benefits to functionalism. One benefit, and a good benefit that functionalism enjoys across many debates, is that it offers a way of understanding these actions while avoiding a grander debate. A better reason, for us, is that it let’s us talk about outputs or systematic outputs. These are, as we have seen in the thesis, of moral import! So, onto functionalism.

The functionalist⁵⁰⁸ could claim that the experiences in dreams have the same functional profile as the experiences in waking life⁵⁰⁹. For functionalists, once one locates the functional profile one has

⁵⁰⁴ The reasons for this are many, although most that I can think of have already been discussed in the thesis. For instance, one view might be that if dream actions are imagined, then we might consider dream morality impossible. This has been combatted at length.

⁵⁰⁵ Of course, it is still open as to whether the agent is morally responsible for those actions.

⁵⁰⁶ Some of this discussion apes discussion from previous sections of the thesis. Here, novelly, there is an appeal to functionalism and meta-awareness as well as *sui generis*ity.

⁵⁰⁷ As an aside, this argument *likely* is best tuned towards an orthodoxy.

⁵⁰⁸ Long-Arm functionalism characterizes the inputs and outputs of the mental state or experience – and the states that are causally related to the mental state or experience – by reaching out into the world. This is to say that a thing’s functional profile is partly defined by its effect on the world external to the agent. Let us take, for example, the desire that I kick a mailbox. That desire is characterized, at least partly, by the effect it produces – from the movement of my leg to the contact with the mailbox. Short-Arm functionalism says that the inputs and outputs are internal to the agent: the inputs and outputs are characterized as sensory receptors or through neurochemicals. For more, see Levin (2018).

⁵⁰⁹ The functionalist argument is not something that functionalists are necessarily committed to: the functionalist can say that the states in question have a certain role, but that role is lacked in dreaming.

located the experience: and so, the functionalist argues that the waking experience is the same as the dream experience. To understand this argument, I will examine muscle-atonia. Muscle atonia is the state of paralysis, or extreme relaxation, of the skeletal muscles while dreaming. In Rapid Eye Movement Sleep Disorder patients lose muscle atonia. In these cases, dreamers show goal directed behavior such as fighting off an attacker. These actions also match dream reports taken when the dreamer wakes up.⁵¹⁰ I think these are evidence of dream experiences having the same short-arm functional role as waking experiences: if I have the waking experience of seeing an attacker the part of my brain responsible for understanding imagery fires up and that would cause other internal process. I might, for example, have my motor neurons fire. If these are successful, this would lead to action which we see in the “goal directed behavior” mentioned above. The long-armed functionalist could say that dream experiences are the same as waking experiences in the rare cases where one dreams veridically and without paralysis. If this claim is true, then the functionalist can provide reasons to think that dream experiences are of a certain kind: the same kind as waking experiences.

While I have given evidence that dream experiences have the same short-arm functional role as waking experiences, there are good reasons not to be committed to the view that they have the same functional role. When I dream and I am paralyzed by the muscle atonia it does not seem to be the case that these two experiences have the same functional profile because one is located within a case of muscle atonia – it is not clear that my neurons *do* fire in most cases. It is possible, instead, that one has different experiences when one is paralyzed than when one is not. I take the plausibility of the long-arm cases might render them only theoretically possible. This would mean that even if this claim were true, it would only apply to a very small amount of dreams, perhaps dreams that are almost impossible to actually have, contain a perceptual experience. Although, perhaps the most intuitively, is that dream actions are *not* successful but appear to be.

Here is how I imagine the objection: dream actions **do** seem successful. Let us go back to that to the case of a dreamer, *in the dream*, climbing a mountain. They, *in the dream*, form an intention to put one foot in front of the other. *In the dream*, this is successful; they have the dream experience of putting one foot in front of the other. The worry, then, is that dream actions *may be* sui generis because their success conditions at least appear to be different; a waking intention to climb a mountain requires that I climb the mountain in order for it to be successful, while a dream intention only requires that to be true *in the dream*.

There is much to say in response to this, but I do believe that I have interesting defenses that look potentially successful. The first response I have is that the content of the intention has nothing to do with

⁵¹⁰ See Schenck & Mahowald (1996), Schenck (2005), Leclair-Visonneau et al. (2010) for more.

the dream. If it were the case that the dreamer's intentional content was of the form 'I intend to, in the dream, climb Everest' then we would say that was successful. However, that is not the intention. The intention was to climb Everest, and the dreamer, upon waking up, realizes that they have failed that intention. I believe that drawing a parallel to virtual reality might be useful to illustrate this point: imagine that I placed my girlfriend, Kenzie, in a virtual reality machine without her knowledge. When she wakes up, she does not know that she is no longer navigating the waking world and instead navigating some identical but constructed fake world. She makes herself coffee, walks to work and has a productive day in the office. However, in her flat, the coffee remains unmade, she never leaves the house and never does an ounce of work. Would we say that Kenzie's three intentions to make coffee, navigate the world, and do work have been met? No! The content of these intentions was not so general that they could be met in a fake world: the content of these intentions *was* to interact successful with the *actual* world! The same looks to be true for dreams because dreamers, at least given the orthodoxy, really do seem believe themselves to be navigating the real world. In fact, as we can recall with our discussion of lucid dreams, they would cease to be non-lucidly dream had they discovered they were in fact dreaming. The feeling of success, or even the visual experience of success, does not seem to fully encapsulate the function of the intention.

The second argument, and it is more modest, is that dreamers do not seem to wake up and report that they had a dream filled with successful intentions. In the cases of bad dreams, dreamers, instead, seem to report that they are thankful that the dream was not real and that that they are glad their intentions otherwise failed. Intuitively, this makes sense of why agents, as we have seen through many examples, feel guilt. They feel as though they *have* formed that problematic intention and were, by some lights, merely lucky that they were dreaming. This phenomenology ought not to be dismissed haphazardly or without reason given (1) we have some reason to trust dreamers and (2) the practical implications of abandoning this phenomenology are widespread. It would make talking about dreams at all very difficult, as has been discussed elsewhere in the thesis.

More concessively, and I believe more ambitiously, I posit that even if these dream intentions or dream actions *are* sui generis they are so in a way that is uninteresting to the thesis. As Driver remarks, these potentially sui generis still have all the features that would mark them for moral evaluation: they are still formed with the intention or belief that *real* consequences could spring from them and they are still formed by reason sensitive agents at least some of the time.⁵¹¹ These conditions are not exhaustive for moral responsibility by some lights and the tactics Driver employs are not at all aimed at sui generis accounts, but I think coopting this line is useful: it seems to me, given what *has* been said about this

⁵¹¹ Driver (2007)

functionalist account that even if the bullet was bit on the success condition **and** sui generis dream actions did not exist it does not follow from that successful condition that moral judgement is moot.

Recall, too, the two arguments mentioned in the second main-body chapter on the thesis. I discussed two additional arguments for an orthodoxy: I discussed phenomenology and I discussed neuroimaging. Neither of these, as was noted then, are sufficient to motivate the orthodoxy to the point of certainty. Neuroimaging, especially, is used to support different ontologies. It could also be the case, one might think, that sui generis experiences would have the same phenomenal character. It is unclear these arguments, then, work here. And so I have tried to employ a more novel argument to help both my thesis and us generally distinguish these views.

So, we have another reason to perhaps reject sui generis' accounts for orthodox accounts. But if that were not the case, we have good reason to believe that even though the success conditions for dream actions are contained *within* the dream that these dream actions are still attempts to act in the real world. If we expected agents to be attempting to drive their car, to repeat an example, *in the dream* and to know the success conditions of that action we would expect them motionless in cases of REM sleep disorder. This is not what happens. Put differently, one may be tempted to think that since the success conditions of dream actions are different from waking actions then dream actions are potentially sui generis. I am posited that that this may be true, but dreamers *seem* to be attempting to perform waking actions. The sui generis-ness of the actions would not be morally exculpatory since agents do not know they are attempting actions with different success conditions.

In this short chapter, I have summarised some of the fallouts of the thesis as well as combatted the implausibility thesis. Initially, I discussed how common the intuition is that dream morality was implausible is. While little has been written on dream morality, the intuition on its implausibility is divided enough that appealing to it as a reason to find dream morality implausible seems dubious. After, I looked at Driver's defense of implausibility: the double life argument. Additionally, I have argued that dream morality is likely uncommon and not all dream morality likely leads to moral blame. These work to undermine the bite of the double life argument.

I then dedicated a small section of the chapter to discuss more positive arguments from the plausibility of dream morality. I would like to remind the reader that these are not arguments for dream morality. Instead, they are arguments against the claim that dream morality looks to be obviously false. By looking at negative arguments, namely that that dreamers are always active or that dream actions are some sui generis action, I gave positive reasons to think that dreamers are, at least sometimes, actions and that dream actions, even if they are sui generis, might still be of moral import.

Chapter 10 On Agency, and Future Discussions of Dream Morality and Agency

As mentioned earlier in the thesis, I now return to discuss agency. While the discussion here is modest, I understand this to be interesting and potentially fruitful for future discussions. I wish to take a short moment to remind the reader of the account of agency that has been used thus far in thesis. Recall that Driver focuses on agency in a specific way: she appeals to the phenomenology of dream actions and writes that agents certainly, at least sometimes, feel as though they have agency. She continues that the paralysis experienced by agents while the dream is not morally exculpatory. She motivates this by reporting, intuitively, that a physically disabled agent is ‘obviously’ capable of right doing and wrongdoing. She writes that dreamers, *in the dream* and *while dreaming*, do still have intentions and try to make those intentions successful.⁵¹² She continues by writing that whatever it is we care about with agency it is at least sometimes present with non-lucid dreamers. In particular, she reports reason responsiveness, the ability to make choices and the ability to have the right sort of motivational structures.⁵¹³ Here, I now offer a probative chapter whose purpose is to briefly examine other accounts of agency, look at ‘authorship’ of dreaming and to see if these other accounts might pose problems for the thesis or indeed be interesting avenues to explore done. In particular, I posit that agency is easier to make sense of for the orthodoxy and harder to make sense of for the imagination theory. However, my account of dream morality and the imagination theory did not require agency. Some might find this curious.

We begin with what Schlosser calls the ‘standard theory’ of agency. It was most famously put forward by Davidson and Anscombe.

The standard theory of action provides us with a theory of agency, according to which a being has the capacity to act intentionally just in case it has the right functional organization: just in case the instantiation of certain mental states and events (such as desires, beliefs, and intentions) would cause the right events (such as certain movements) in the right way.⁵¹⁴

Agency, then, is expressed as intentional action. Important to this standard conception of agency is that there exists a close bond between intentional action and acting for a reason or reasons. Davidson and Anscombe believe that acting for a reason is to

...act in a way that can be rationalized by the premises of sound practical syllogism, which consists, typically, of a major premise that corresponds to the agent’s goal and a minor premise that corresponds to the agent’s take on how to attain the goal.⁵¹⁵

⁵¹² Recall what has been said about success elsewhere. One might think that *in the dream* these intentions are at least sometimes successful because *in the dream* something happens as a result of these intentions. However, it is unclear that the agent’s intention is for their intention to be successful *in the dream* – in fact it seems as though since they do not **know** that they are dreaming they would view the success condition for that intention to be that it is effective in waking life.

⁵¹³ Driver (2007, 10)

⁵¹⁴ Schlosser (2019)

⁵¹⁵ Schlosser (2019)

One might think that this account of agency problematises some of the thesis, especially for orthodox accounts. If it must be the case that these mental states and events have to cause the right events in the right way you might believe that dream actions systematically fail to do so: that is the dream intention rarely leads to causing the right events in the right way when contrasted to waking events. For example, in a waking case my intention to walk to the store to get food causes the right events of me grabbing my wallet and leaving the house in a straightforwardly right way. The minutia of my mental life lines up with action in a way where I am clearly, given this account, acting intentionally. Contrast this, as we have done before in the thesis, with dream actions. The minutia of mental life does not seem to have the right functional profile in the dream: my intention to go to the store *in the dream* only causes the right events *in the dream* and perhaps not even in the right way. One might argue that in order to *actually* express agency with the dream intention it would have to be the case that I put my shoes on, or started walking, *while dreaming*.

It is hard to see, at least to me, how this would affect what has been said about the orthodoxy. It seems to me that even if it were the case that dreamers are not expressing agency, they are still engaging in moralised activity: as Driver notes so long as dreamers are forming intentions, reasoning and trying to act then we likely have enough to discuss potential right doing and wrongdoing.

This account of agency, too, likely means little to what I have said on the imagination theory and potential moral responsibility. It does not matter, given my account, if the dream content is intentional or if the response to the dream is intentional. This led to the moral evaluation bar being lower, and perhaps there is a higher bar to be argued for if dreamers do perform the intentional action of rejoining a morally problematic fantasy-dream with the intention of enjoying it – in this case they are, by the standard conception, expressing agency as they have expressed an intentional action and were successful with it. So, the standard account likely does little to what has been said given the orthodoxy and Driver's argument discussed earlier puts pressure on an account that would have dreamers fail to express agency. By examining this account of agency with the imagination theory in mind, it could be the case that a stricter moral evaluation than the one proposed in that chapter is on the table, if it were the case that a dreamer intentionally dreamt content that was problematic with the express desire to enjoy it (and were successful in their enjoying of it).

Well, what about other important accounts of agency? Parsed as either an additional criterion for agency or its own condition, many believe that agency requires initiation by the agent. On our first account of what this might mean we have it that an action is initiated by an agent so long as the action “consists in causation by the relevant intentions.”⁵¹⁶ This is to say that an agent has expressed agency if they have

⁵¹⁶ Schlosser (2019) and Schlosser cites Brand, Bratman, Bishop, Mele and Enç as examples.

initiated an action, and that action is caused by the right sort of intentions.⁵¹⁷ The second account of initiation has at its core the ability to cause, but they jettison the reason-sensitive and rationality integral to the standard conception. Instead, it is the case that, according to this second account, that agents can express agency ‘spontaneously’ and “may initiate an action for no reason and without prior intent.” As Schlosser sums up:

On this view, reasons and intentions may have a strong and even a decisive influence on how an agent acts. But agency has its source in the power to initiate, and the exercise of this power cannot be reduced to the agent’s being moved by reasons or intentions.

It is interesting, and more fruitful, to discuss *what* may be initiated in the dream. The first feature to discuss is dream content or dream narrative as distinct from dream action. What the dream content *is* will depend on the ontology. For the orthodoxy, there will be a difference between the dream action, which *does* sometimes seem initiated given both the standard account and this second account of agency, and the dream content which is likely to be created without reason, or rationality, or any real sense of intention. However, if these features are *not* required for agency then dreams *do* seem initiated by the agent in this spontaneous way. So, for the orthodoxy, it would be the case that dream action is a result of agency given both accounts, but dream content is likely only a result of agency on this more permissive account. Given that the dream content, as distinct from dream action, is not the focus of dream morality if the orthodoxy is true, this is interesting but should not impact the conclusions of the thesis.

In contrast, the imagination theory lacks an account of dream action under most lights. Instead, recall, that dreamers do not intend to *p* in dreams. Instead, they *imagine* they intend to *p* or straightforwardly just imagine *p*. Is it the case that dreams intend to imagine, given the imagination theory? I believe this is genuinely unclear. Recall McGinn, Ichikawa and Wittgenstein all offer an account of imagination where imagination *is* a creation and of doing – this is contrasted to ‘receiving’. Here is McGinn citing Wittgenstein:

We do not ‘banish’ visual impression as we do images. And we don’t say of the former, either, that we might *not* banish them⁵¹⁸ ... The concept of imagining is rather like one of doing than receiving. Imaging is a creative act. (And is of course so called.)⁵¹⁹ ⁵²⁰

This, again, comes from the broader discussion of whether imagination is subject to the will. The answer offered by key proponents of both imagination and of imagination theory of dreaming is that “yes, dreaming is subject to the will.” But does this mean it is an expression of agency? In the alternative conception, likely yes. But for the less permissive, standard account, one might resist that one intends to dream specific dream content (in most cases) or that one reasons to form dream content given the

⁵¹⁷ This rendition builds upon the standard conception discussed above.

⁵¹⁸ Wittgenstein (1967: 621)

⁵¹⁹ Wittgenstein (1967: 633)

⁵²⁰ Ichikawa (2009: 106)

imagination theory. The contrast in phenomenology between non-lucid dreams and lucid dreams is illustrative: in lucid dreams, which have been leant on to support an imagination ontology of dreaming⁵²¹, it does seem as though agents can intend to alter the dream content.⁵²² This does contrast with the reported experience of non-lucid dreams.⁵²³ A good reading here, I believe, would be that dreams are initiated by the agent *but only* for the permissive account. There do not seem to reason that agents have access to and there does not seem to be this deliberation process. On a standard, more restrictive, account of agency as initiation, dreams come from us but we do not seem to form the intention to dream; for it seems hard to say that we even know *how* to create specific dream content in non-lucid dreams. If we do know how, as Ichikawa likely implies, we do not have access to it or have otherwise forgotten. It is unclear what the impact here *is* on the thesis. Again, it does not seem to me particularly important that the agent express agency if the imagination theory of dreams is true. Instead, what is important is a combination of the dream they have and their response to that dream.

The last view of agency I wish to discuss is Frankfurt's account⁵²⁴ which was then built upon by Talyor.⁵²⁵ For Frankfurt, humans are marked as different because of their second-order desires. A second order desires are desires whose content is first order desires. A first order desire, for example, would be my desire to eat cake. If I connected with that desire; I wanted that desire and wanted to be motivated by that desire then we could say that I have a desire to desire to eat cake. That is an example of a second order desire. For Frankfurt, the key is that one 'identify' with their desires and this is captured by them 'wanting' those desires. Taylor takes this as the distinction between human agency and non-human agency.⁵²⁶ So, succinctly, what is required for agency is that an agent identify with the motives for their actions; and that this could perhaps be described as ownership of those actions.

So, is it ever the case that dreamers can identify with their dream actions, given the orthodoxy? Yes! In the way that dreams are reported, it seems that agents often feel ownership over their actions and a connection to them. While it will rarely, if ever, be in the express language of desiring a desire, what is clear is that dream is often reported in the same way one might report a historic action. Here is an otherwise unexciting dream report from Barb Sanders:

I'm driving down the M City main street. Icy streets. I start to brake gently blocks away, to the turn corner. I'm very careful. I go to a corner restaurant. An older fellow is there named Charlie

⁵²¹ See Ichikawa (2007) and Ichikawa (2009)

⁵²² This is explained earlier in the thesis.

⁵²³ The section in the imagination chapter of thesis wherein I discuss control may be useful here.

⁵²⁴ See Frankfurt (1971)

⁵²⁵ Taylor (1977) & Schlosser (2019)

⁵²⁶ Schlosser notes that it is unclear, as it is with the previous account, if this is meant to be an extension of the standard account or a replacement. I am going to treat it as a replacement because I believe focusing on second order desires is fruitful and might capture moral intuitions around dreaming in nice ways.

Charisma. Sometimes he ignores me. I order French toast, omelet, etc., hot chocolate. Dark woods in tables, rich place.⁵²⁷

As Driver remarks the phenomenology of actions in dreams is identical to the phenomenology of waking actions. And here, in many of these reports, the actions and desires *are not* marked in a way that we might expect if an agent were disowning them.⁵²⁸

There are cases, too, where we might think that someone *does not* connect with their dream actions. This case from Barb Sanders looks as though it might be a case where they do not have the second order desire.

He [Jerome] suggests we go for a drive in his sports car. I don't want to. He's married and I didn't do his sheets so he would like me, I did them to hide my wrong doing, but I get in the car anyway. It's very low to the ground and I say, "I hope I can get out again." I'm in the passenger side and as we go, I notice it's hard to see up and over the dashboard. Jerome is very suave and flirty. Now I'm in the back seat and high school friend Dora is in the front next to Jerome. He calls her Betty, twice. We stop at a Mexican restaurant. I groan because I don't like Mexican food; It's too spicy. He says they have rooms in the basement, meaning a motel like place and I can see the handwriting on the wall. I don't want to have an affair with him, but I go in anyway.⁵²⁹

At least tentatively, one might say that the connection between desire, ownership and action is missing here. I am happy to grant that, at least for some cases, that dream actions are not appropriately, in the right hierarchy, aligned for agency. But this, I believe, would be expected! If it were the case that dream actions, and some extent, dream agency mirrored waking actions and waking agency we would expect cases where agents do and cases where agents do not exert agency successfully.

A hierarchical account, such as Frankfurt's and Taylor's, is more 'limiting' for the imagination theory. It is far less clear that many dreams have their content come from their desires, let alone their desire to desire. In fact, *even if* the dream were enjoyed it seems likely that the dreamer would disown both the dream narrative and the response they have had to that dream.

Does this undermine what I have said? No, but a theme is emerging: common understandings of agency (1) have not been discussed in reference to the imagination theory of dreams and (2) agency is likely absent in the creation of dream content. However, it does not seem that this is sufficient to do with away with the potential for dream morality. This is because my account has not placed agency at its centre. Possibly, and again I want to remark that this is tentative, part of the reason why we treat fantasy differently from many or most actions is because it often does seem out our control. Nonetheless

⁵²⁷ Barb Sanders #0061 (1997-??-??)

⁵²⁸ You might think this is insufficient for an argument, but it is worth recalling that much of what has been used to motivate the orthodox accounts have been phenomenological arguments. So, at least dialectically, this line will likely be efficacious for those who are already proponents of the orthodoxy.

⁵²⁹ Barb Sanders #2045 (1992-01-27)

arguments and intuition have it that one might be held, at least, in disesteem. It is bizarre, some might remark, that moral agency, or at least the capacity for an agent to be held in some kind of disesteem or responsibility, comes apart from more generic agency.

But we must be careful: in *some* way dreams *must* come from us. I want to discuss two options here. The first is a Freudian analysis. This is mentioned quickly because modern empirical support for such a view is not sufficient. Then I explain the dream continuity hypothesis.

Briefly, Freud believes that dreams are representations of wishes and dreams themselves function as wish fulfilment. Specifically, he thinks that when we come to properly understand dreams, then we will see that their meaning is to fulfil an unconscious wish that was suppressed by the conscious mind. The wish was suppressed by the conscious mind, Freud continues, because it was in some way considered unacceptable by the agent.⁵³⁰ Often, it is because the dreamer would find the wish repulsive to them or that it conflicts with good social norms.⁵³¹ While Freudian accounts are broadly unpopular within philosophy⁵³², the core idea that dreams (1) come from us, (2) are not random and (3) are in some way continuous with waking life is one that remains popular.

Secondly, I want to talk about a popular contemporary view called the ‘dream continuity hypothesis’. The dream continuity hypothesis states that dream contents are mostly continuous with the contents the dreamer experiences and thinks about in their waking life.⁵³³ It is not the claim that dreams are continuous with experiences you have while you go to bed: it is more precisely that the goals, concerns and dispositional emotions you have in waking life manifest in the dream either directly or through symbolism. I will use Domhoff’s *The Scientific Study of Dreams: Neural Networks, cognitive development, and Content Analysis* to illustrate: Domhoff studied a woman given the pseudonym “Barbara Sanders.” Domhoff’s collected data about Barbara’s life and used that to confirm, or disconfirm, what we now call the continuity hypothesis. For example, Domhoff asked questions about Barbara’s work life. Questions about mood and coworkers were common. Domhoff found that if she were experiencing conflict with a coworker a symbolic representation of that coworker would sometimes be present in the dream. More commonly, though, there was emotional continuity between waking states and dreaming states. The ups and downs in her real-life relationships were manifested in dream content: the characters and narrative of the dream reflected, in some way, Barbara’s beliefs, concerns and

⁵³⁰ Normally, we would distinguish a wish from a desire. I understand a desire as having motivational content, and a wish as lacking that motivational content. Freud does not the same distinction. It is possible, one might think, that it is better to understand ‘wish’ as ‘desire’ for the purposes of applying a Frankfurtian account of agency.

⁵³¹ Freud builds a functional account into this: that dreams are meant to help us fulfil these wishes or desires in an acceptable and risk-free way. Importantly, too, is that the dreamer themselves not always be made aware of *what* the desire or wish is.

⁵³² With the exception of Mark Solms. See Solms (2000) for more.

⁵³³ Schredl (2003) argues that the dream continuity hypothesis is vague. I think he is correct - most formulations talk about “most” dreams but these theories have different understanding of “most” and why it is most and not all is unclear. Different defenders of the hypothesis also have a different understanding of the continuity. This is not surprising – Freud and Jung’s analysis of continuity differs from more modern accounts like Domhoff’s.

dispositional emotions. Here is an example: Sanders was close to one of her brothers. She dreamt of him often and those dreams were nearly always positive. Sanders believed that her brother was a good person and that she liked her brother. This belief and that dispositional emotion appear in those dreams where she has a happy dream narrative including him. Sanders waking emotional state could also persist into the dream: if Sanders was anxious about an upcoming presentation she has to give at work, she might have an anxiety dream. In this instance, the object of the anxiety is different – rather than dreaming she was anxious about a presentation the dream had different contents like all her teeth falling out.⁵³⁴ There is a broad consensus that continuity hypothesis has strong empirical backing.⁵³⁵

It is important to mark how the dream continuity hypothesis is different from a Freudian analysis because, at least at surface level, Freud does think that dream content is continuous with waking life. Where Freud and Domhoff diverge is that Domhoff believes that *far more* persists in the dream: for Freud, dream content is dictated by the repressed wish or desire. For Domhoff, far more of our waking life is continuous with the dream. Goals and emotions are singled out. However, both agree that dreams can be symbolic. While Freud thinks the dream ‘hides’ its continuity, Domhoff thinks that can happen but does not always happen; Domhoff is content with saying that not all dreams are symbolic. Domhoff also does *not* propose a functional purpose to dreams like Freud does.

Why mention this with reference to agency? Well, I have put forward that these accounts of agency pose little issue for my chapters that either argue for or assume the orthodoxy. But one might be worried that those dream content, which is part of the proper object of moral evaluation for the imagination view, is far less obviously a product of agency. What I have hoped to prove is that there is a historic tradition of believing that agents are the authors of the own dreams, albeit often unconsciously. While we might not think that dreams are consciously sired, they do come ‘from us’.

Given what I have said elsewhere in the thesis, this is *may be* sufficient for moral evaluation.⁵³⁶ I have argued that agency does not matter for our ethics of fantasy because it does not feature in my account in the imagination chapter. However, we may think that a tracing account⁵³⁷ looks ever more promising because it avoids this potentially bizarre conclusion that the popular accounts of agency are not required for moral assessability. Although one might think, as I have argued with reference to disesteem, that merely lowering the bar on assessability is enough to avoid this potential unintuitive conclusion.

⁵³⁴ It is possible that this is a different anxiety because the object of the anxiety is different. In order to remain neutral, I will say that the dreamers are in state of dispositional anxiety as they get into bed. This has some causal relation to an episodic anxiety in their dream.

⁵³⁵ See Domhoff (1996), Strauch & Meier (1996) and Schrdl 2003

⁵³⁶ As noted in the absurdity chapter,

⁵³⁷ At the end of the chapter on responsibility, I posited that one way to get to dream morality is to argue that because some dream action possibly happens despite being predictable and preventable.

I want to be clear here: the popular account amongst the proponents of the orthodoxy seems to be – and again this is given Driver’s rendition of agency – that dream content is *out width* our control in a way that *dream action* is not. Dream actions, those intentions that agents attempt to make successful in dreams, are voluntary and willed. By contrast, the world in which one finds oneself in comes from us but is it remarked as willed.

The imagination theory’s view is more complicated: there are no dream actions in the way that there are for the orthodoxy: instead, dream actions are things one imagines oneself doing or imagines someone else doing. But by Ichikawa’s lights dream content (which now encompasses the entirety of the dream as per our explanation in an early chapter) is willed, or is subject to the will. It is just not controlled even when it could be. Given the arguments I have presented, this does not matter that much for our conclusions, and perhaps the reason for this is because the bar aimed for was no longer a robust sort of moral blame but instead a more modest disesteem.

There is much more to say here. As was said when agency was first mentioned near the start of the thesis, this thesis has very much ‘followed suit’. At least when discussing moral agency, the phenomenology of dream actions has been used to justify that dreamers *do* express agency. This relies on the orthodoxy being true. When agency has been discussed, as it has by Cowan, it has been in to do with the dream protagonist *not* being the same as the dreamer themselves. This has been discussed early in the thesis in order to motivate initial plausibility of dream morality. It has not been discussed in this way. A connection between moral agency and non-moral agency, especially considering the imagination view, would be an interesting and novel port to explore further.

Chapter 11 Conclusion

For the last time, I want to reintroduce the standard argument. I also want to pay specific attention to the additional thesis added to the end. The standard argument is as follows:

1. Dream Orthodoxy. Simply, that dreams “are constituted by sensory experiences, beliefs, emotions, intentions, etc. that are of the same psychological type as those formed in waking life.”⁵³⁸
2. Evaluational Internalism. This is the claim that what matters for moral evaluation are those features internal to a person’s agency. For instance, their intentions.
3. Internalist Dream Content: subjects sometimes form, in non-lucid dreams, psychological states or propositional attitudes for which they can be evaluated for, given Internalism.
4. No Special Condition: non-lucid dreamers are at least sometimes in a state that does not render them immune to moral evaluation.

If all four theses are true, then dream morality follows. Cowan explains dream morality as:

sometimes, perhaps only rarely, what we do in non-lucid dreams is the proper object of moral assessment as wrong, right, vicious, virtuous, blameworthy, or praiseworthy.⁵³⁹

There is an additional thesis:

Dream Morality is highly implausible⁵⁴⁰.

What prompted my interest in dream morality was not a clerical exegesis of modern dream ontologies, but a genuine wonder as to whether that the guilt that one feels upon waking up after a particular dream was ill-placed or well-placed. The assumption running through much of the literature, as we can see by the implausibility thesis, is that it is *always* misplaced; that dream morality is implausible. In fact, as we have seen, dream morality is sometimes parsed as so implausible that it forms a *de facto reductio ad absurdum* against any set of positions or arguments that entail it. This is, indeed, what Driver posits: she wields dream immorality as a stick to beat internalists with!

I have engaged with the arguments around dream morality, but in the background (and often the foreground) I have hoped to, throughout, really challenge this idea that dream morality *is* this stick to be used against arguments or positions. I have tried hard, especially in initial chapters, to restrict the scope on inquiry sufficiently so that ‘obvious’ absurd cases are excluded from dream morality. I have shown that dream morality is less absurd than moral luck. I have shown that, once we discuss what we mean by dream morality either through by looking at moral responsibility or by looking at imagination, we get intuitive answers that make it seem as though dream morality would be palatable in the rare circumstances that it occurs. This culminates in my penultimate main body chapter where I take a close

⁵³⁸ Cowan (2021: 4)

⁵³⁹ Cowan (2021: 6)

⁵⁴⁰ Cowan (2021: 7)

and thorough examination of *why* someone would think that dream morality is absurd. I, with ammo procured throughout the thesis, beat back Driver's explanation. I even deal with some argumentation not yet found in the literature, but which I assume people would put forward; e.g. I argue about the sort of intuitions people have around dream morality. Finally, I try to give some good, explicit, reasons for why dream morality might not be absurd.

To be clear, much of this thesis has been engaged with Cowan's standard argument. This argument is interesting and one of the very few pieces of philosophy that engage with dream morality as its primary focus. While, again, a lot of engagement here is novel from my part it is worth noting that I believe I go beyond the standard argument: I challenge the assumption that backs it; that is used to explain its usefulness. I do not think, by what I have said in this thesis, that the standard argument can be used as a *reductio* because in the cases where dream morality does actually occur it does not look absurd.

There are two more things to say in this conclusion. Firstly, I want to repeat some of the main lines of argument in this thesis. Afterwards, I want to suggest what I think would be good avenues to explore further down.

This thesis began with chapters concerned with setting out key positions and explaining key terminology. Namely, there were discussions of orthodox and imaginative ontologies, as well as lucidity, agency, dream action and dream content as well as the difference between 'in the dream' and 'while dreaming'. It is important to understand these terms in order to understand the arguments at play. But I also see these earlier chapters as serving a dual purpose: they begin, I hope, to motivate one away from thinking dream morality is a *reductio*.

Our first long chapter is engaged with defending that dreams could be morally responsible for what they do in the dream. This chapter primarily engages with Cowan's forthcoming paper "Moral Responsibility While Dreaming." I argue that dreamers, at least sometimes, express agency in dreams; that we can sometimes attribute actions to dreamers; that dreamers are sometimes morally competent; and therefore, that dreamers sometimes meet the conditions for moral responsibility. I also argue, in addition to these cases, that so long as dreamers can reasonably predict that they will have certain dreams they are responsible for what they do so long as they do not take steps to prevent those dreams where they act badly. My hope here, too, is that the restricted scope (again reiterated at length in the absurdity chapter) really helps push people to see dream morality as plausible.

Afterwards, I began engaging more with ‘the standard argument’. I argued that SAD externalism⁵⁴¹ (alongside the rest of the standard argument) leads to dream morality. Although, naïve externalism plausibly avoids dream morality I argued that naïve externalism is committed to moral luck. Moral luck is powerfully unintuitive mostly because it is unfair. I argued that even though naïve externalism avoids dream morality, SAD externalism is the ‘better’ view between the externalisms because it avoids moral luck. So, the dream morality thesis was preserved even if internalism was false and externalism true.

Since subbing externalism for internalism was unsuccessful in avoiding dream morality I next tested the idea that a different dream ontology might avoid it. I was still assuming internalism for this chapter. I explained the imagination theory of dreaming. I focused on Ichikawa’s account of the imagination theory. I argued that, through an analysis of fantasy, that since some dreams are fantasies and that we react, while dreaming, inappropriately to those fantasies then the dream morality thesis obtains. I defended against numerous objections. The two I wish to highlight now are that I defended against the notion that dreams are constituted by i-states⁵⁴² and that dreams are not subject to the will. I argued that this is an avenue not open to the imagination theorist since, as Ichikawa admits, dreams are a kind of a thing that is subject to the will. I bolstered by defense against these objections by suggesting that even if dreams were constituted by i-states and dreams were not subject to the will this is not sufficient to think that dream morality would be impossible.

Next, I explored the possibility that externalism and the imagination theory were both true. I discussed a variety of reasons to think that imagination and dreams could both have consequences. I argued that they have both non-systematic and systematic consequences. I specifically looked at visualisation and fantasy. I appealed to some of the studies mentioned by Cowan that while, although small, give us some reason to think that dreams have consequences.

Then, I argue against implausibility. The implausibility thesis (that dream morality is implausible) is often taken for granted. For instance, both Ichikawa and Driver think of dream morality as intuitively implausible. I argue, however, that these intuitions are not shared. I discuss some other contemporary philosophers (and some not-so-contemporary) philosophers who believe dream morality is not implausible. I also discuss some folk intuitions implausibility. I engage with the argument Driver gives to motivate implausibility. I conclude that the argument does not work for a variety of reasons. Then, finally, I give another positive argument for plausibility.

⁵⁴¹ SAD stands for Systematic, Actualist and Direct.

⁵⁴² I-States are imagined states. So, if dreams were constituted by i-states it would not be the case that one felt disgust in a dream, but that one felt i-disgust.

Finally, I offer a brief discussion of agency. For the purposes of brevity and parsimony with previous accounts, I used Driver's account of agency. I quickly tested some of my conclusions of the thesis against new accounts of agency. For some, these results will have been surprising. But I believe they are what we would expect given how I have explained and argued for the sorts of moral judgement I have explained and argued for in the thesis.

This thesis has discussed a large volume of content. It has, as has become tradition for discussions of dreaming, dipped its metaphorical toes into many pools. Still, there is much more to examine! I propose two interesting places where more could be done. The first is this idea of dreams as pretend play. I see this as potentially being able to make sense of muscle atonia cases while maintaining an imagination ontology of dreaming. From that, we could see dreams as dreamers acting their imagination. This looks as though dreams might be sorts of pretend play and that leaves open the possibility of them being morally evaluated as such. Kind gives the example of her son running around menacingly chomping people because he is pretending to be a terrible monster and terrible monsters are the sort of things that chomp people. Kind supposes that this reveals a desire to act *exactly like* a real monster.⁵⁴³ Kind insists that her son will have to approximate a terrible monster since, in her house, biting is firmly off-limits. This account looks straightforward for both internalists and externalists. For internalists, the desire to be a chomping monster, the beliefs required to act like a chomping monster and the intention to chomp all look problematic. For the externalist, pretending to be a monster in this way leads directly to bad outcomes and plausibly the psychological states lead systematically to bad outcomes. However, there is another kind of pretend-play that I find interesting. Imagine a method actor who never *actually* desires to be the serial killer he is playing but is wholly committed to the role. They are pretending to be a serial killer and pretending to have the internal life of a serial killer. Something about this makes me uneasy: it could be that the worry is they might 'tip' over into having actual desires and the worry is about risk, but this does not seem to fully capture the intuition. It seems possible to me that if the imagination theory is true then some dreams are instances of pretend-play. Not all pretend-play looks permissible, but is dreaming pretend-play ever permissible? If so, what instances are and are not permissible? These are, to me, interesting questions.

Another interesting feature of the thesis, and indeed of the discussion of dream morality in general, is the asymmetry of moral evaluation. The cases that people bring forward and the cases that philosophers discuss are almost always about wrongdoing and blame. I have discussed, in places, the idea that thinking we can fulfill duties in dreams is dubious, but I have not discussed whether praise is ever appropriate for a dream action. Tentatively, it seems as though the things I have about moral

⁵⁴³ Kind (2011: 15)

responsibility *should* apply for praise as well. It would be interesting to investigate this. If the result was that there was an asymmetry it would be worth investigating if that was problematic for the thesis.

Of course, there is far more of interest. Windt calls the philosophy of dreaming a “long marginalized”⁵⁴⁴ topic. However, lots of recent scientific and philosophical work has been done on dreaming begging to be engaged with further.

⁵⁴⁴ Windt (2021)

[The Motor Atonia of REM Sleep: A Critical Topics Forum - PMC \(nih.gov\)](#)

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