

## MORAL RESPONSIBILITY WHILE DREAMING

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Are subjects ever morally responsible for their dreams? In this paper I argue that if, as some theories of dreams entail, dreaming subjects sometimes express agency while they dream, then they are sometimes morally responsible for what they do and are potentially worthy of praise and blame while they dream and after they have awoken. I end by noting the practical and theoretical implications of my argument.

**C**ONSIDER the following dream report:

CHEATING: 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 any more, so I respond and we make love. It's wonderful. (Barb Sanders #1807 (1991-03-31). Accessed on 13/01/2023 from DreamBank)

Note, first, that CHEATING is a *nonlucid* dream report, that is, the subject was not aware that they were dreaming while they dreamt. On some accounts, subjects sometimes express their agency while having nonlucid dreams like that reported in CHEATING. For instance, on the "Orthodox" theory, endorsed by philosophers from Augustine (400/2003)<sup>1</sup> to Descartes (1641/1996) to Revonsuo (2006), dreams are a kind of virtual reality, made up of sensory experiences, beliefs, emotions, desires, and intentions of the same psychological kind as those in waking life.<sup>2</sup> Elsewhere, Pluralists like Driver (2007) and M. Rosen (2021a; 2021b; 2021c) hold

1. At least according to some interpretations such as Matthews (1981).

2. See Flanagan (2000) who *seems* to espouse a similar view and Nielsen (2010) for a review of theories of dreams as *simulations of waking reality*.

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that Orthodoxy is only true of some dreams. Other theorists present evidence in support of the claim that agential activity, such as attempted intention enactment, sometimes occurs in nonlucid dreams (Purcell, Moffitt, & Hoffmann 1993; Dresler et al. 2012). If any of these theories are correct, CHEATING could involve an expression of agency by being partly constituted by the formation of, or the attempt to enact, an intention to *have extramarital sex with someone who is in a sexually exclusive relationship* (hereafter “intention to cheat”).<sup>3</sup>

In this paper I argue for a conditional conclusion:

*Dream Responsibility*: If subjects sometimes express agency while nonlucidly dreaming, then they are sometimes morally responsible for what they do and are potentially worthy of praise or blame while dreaming and after they have awoken.

After responding to the objection that dreams are morally innocuous and that potential for moral praise and blame is therefore never actualised, I defend Dream Responsibility. Specifically, I argue that, if subjects sometimes express agency while dreaming then they sometimes meet conditions typically regarded as jointly sufficient for moral responsibility.<sup>4</sup> First, I argue that at least some dreaming subjects are likely *competent* while dreaming (or at least that we lack reason to think subjects are always *incompetent*)<sup>5</sup> and that some subjects are *culpably incompetent* while dreaming. Second, I argue that dreaming subjects sometimes meet *awareness* conditions, and that cases of *culpable ignorance* are anyway possible. I then reject attempts to deny that anyone ever possesses standing to blame subjects for expressions of agency while dreaming. I end by highlighting practical and theoretical implications of my argument.

Dream Responsibility has hitherto only been briefly discussed in the literature.<sup>6</sup> A notable example is Sosa’s (2005) and Ichikawa’s (2009; 2016) appeal to the truth of Dream Responsibility as part of their argument against the Orthodoxy and in favour of the Imagination theory, according to which dreaming is (roughly) a form of imagining. Given Dream Responsibility, the Orthodoxy (but

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3. Since the subject *unknowingly* inhabits a dreamworld, the relevant intention is *not* to dream that they cheat (which may be morally innocuous) or to cheat while they are dreaming (which may be practically impossible).

4. Blame and praiseworthiness may depend entirely upon actual consequences, independent of competence or awareness. See Cowan (2023) for an argument for Dream Responsibility based upon such theories.

5. Pace Smuts (2015).

6. For brief defence of something like Dream Responsibility see Flanagan (2000) and M. Rosen (2021a). Mullane (1965) is sympathetic. Matthews (1981) argues that Augustine was committed to moral responsibility while dreaming. Freud (1899/2008) and certain 19th century psychologists such as Hildebrandt may have been sympathetic.

allegedly not the Imagination theory) is committed to the apparently implausible conclusion that subjects are sometimes blameworthy for what they do while dreaming.<sup>7,8</sup>

While I agree with Ichikawa and Sosa about the truth of Dream Responsibility, I diverge with them in (at least) three crucial respects. First, they don't consider awareness conditions on responsibility while dreaming, hence their defence of Dream Responsibility is incomplete. Second, they neglect the possibility that subjects could be culpably incompetent or ignorant while dreaming, and thus overlook powerful arguments for Dream Responsibility. Finally, while they regard Dream Responsibility as a problem for Orthodoxy, I don't think that the consequent of Dream Responsibility (that subjects are potentially blameworthy for what they do while dreaming, etc.) is implausible when appreciated in context. Indeed, this paper can be understood as providing some support for it.

## 1. Clarifying Dream Responsibility

The primary goal of this section is to clarify Dream Responsibility. Along the way I also provide a limited defence of the antecedent, that subjects sometimes express agency while nonlucidly dreaming. Apart from aiding understanding, the argument is aimed at addressing the worry that Dream Responsibility is uninteresting because the antecedent is false. It not intended to be decisive. However, readers who are persuaded are welcome to interpret the paper as completing a deductive argument in favour of the consequent, that subjects are sometimes morally responsible for what they do while dreaming, etc. In this section I also provide a limited justification for the claim that, if subjects are morally responsible for their expressions of agency while dreaming, then this sometimes persists into waking life. In sum, this section should hopefully set the stage for my argument in favour of Dream Responsibility.

Subjects often report having had dreams while they slept about which they claim ownership, for example, "in my dream . . .". Reports suggest that dreams are typically inhabited by an average of 3–4 dream characters (Hall & Van De Castle 1966) who interact within the dreamworld. Among these characters, the waking subject typically identifies with one, the so-called "Dream Self" (about

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7. Ichikawa and Sosa discuss this issue in the context of arguing against the claim that subjects form *beliefs* while dreaming. Their full argument is that if beliefs were formed while dreaming we should expect intentions to be formed too; but the formation of intentions while dreaming would imply moral assessment of dreams, which they think is implausible. So, we should reject the claim that beliefs are formed.

8. Driver (2007) argues that if moral evaluation is entirely determined by systematic consequences, then agency while dreaming isn't morally assessable. For an argument against this strategy see Cowan (2023).

90% of the time according to Strauch & Meier 1996), for example, “in my dream I pestered my mother”. The Dream Self is normally the protagonist (between 70% [Strauch & Meier 1996] and 95% [Snyder 1970] of the time), playing an active and central role.<sup>9</sup> Subjects typically experience dreams from the first-person perspective of the Dream Self (90% of dreams according to Foulkes & Kerr 1994<sup>10</sup>), that is, they experience being and acting in the dream world from their perspective.

A crucial distinction is between what happened *in* a subject’s dream (its content), and what is true of a subject *while* they dream (Sosa 2005). To appreciate this, consider the report “in my dream I pestered my mother”. This report of what happened *in* the subject’s dream is not a good guide to what was going on *while* the subject was dreaming (they were asleep). Similarly, something can be true of a subject *while* they dream—for example, they are snoring—without reflecting what happened *in* their dream (they were pestering their mother).

Most theorists take subjects’ reports as evidence of experiences and thoughts had while sleeping.<sup>11</sup> Substantive disagreement emerges regarding the precise nature of the experiences and thoughts, for example, whether they are imaginative, and so forth. A further controversy concerns whether what occurs in dreams is a product of subjects’ expressions of agency while dreaming. As noted in the introduction, some theories claim that agency is sometimes expressed while subjects dream in the form of intentions, decisions, etc.<sup>12</sup> I now clarify this claim as well as provide some limited support.

The most immediately attractive way to cash this out is to appeal to an intimate connection between the dreaming subject (hereafter ‘the dreamer’) and the Dream Self. There are two ways of making this precise: (1) the dreamer is *numerically identical* to the Dream Self; (2) the Dream Self is the dreamer’s *virtual avatar*, that is, the dreamer directly controls the Dream Self through their own expressions of agency while dreaming which the Dream Self manifests in the dream.

Since (2) is more modest I focus on it in what follows. Support comes from the conjunction of two claims. First, the Dream Self often expresses agency *in*

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9. Some dreams are experienced from the first-person of a protagonist who is very different from the waking self, e.g., as where *I* am Napoleon in a dream (see Revonsuo 2005).

10. Subjects sometimes experience Dream Self acts from the third-person (see M. Rosen & Sutton 2013). Sometimes perspectives switch (Cicogna & Bosinelli 2001).

11. See, e.g., Dennett (1976) for dissent.

12. Whether these are of the same psychological type as those formed in waking life depends on how we individuate mental states. If we assume a Functionalism which individuates mental states in terms of purely psychological or neurophysiological inputs and outputs (‘short-arm’ functional role) then dream intentions could be of the same type as waking ones. Things are less clear if we adopt alternative ‘long-arm’ views of functional role. See Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy entry on “Functionalism” <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/functionalism/>.

dreams. A cursory search through dream report databases such as the *Dream-Bank*<sup>13</sup> or the *Sleep and Dream Database*<sup>14</sup> provides evidence that Dream Selves sometimes engage in paradigmatic expressions of agency, such as intending, deciding, resisting, etc. Even assuming the general unreliability of reports, the prevalence of agential language in dream reports is striking.<sup>15</sup>

Second, although dreamers don't normally physically act out their dreams, this is plausibly due to their skeletal muscles being actively suppressed by neural structures in the brain stem rendering them paralysed (Hobson et al. 2000). This suppression fails in subjects with REM Sleep Behaviour Disorder (RBD), Notably, such individuals physically act in ways that sometimes mimic the actions of the Dream Self. As M. Rosen (2021b: 6502) explains:

RBD gives weight to the claim that bodily movements that occur within dreams would be carried out by our physical bodies if they weren't prevented from doing so by paralysis. In such cases, it is plausible to claim that the dreamer engages in *virtual* behaviours and actions.

Assuming relevant similarity between normal dreamers and RBD sufferers, this is evidence for the virtual avatar view.<sup>16</sup>

However, even if view (2) is true, some might worry about diachronic numerical identity between the dreaming and *waking* subject (or if (1) is true, that there is numerical identity between the Dream Self and waking subject). This is important, since Dream Responsibility requires that waking subjects are sometimes blameworthy for the agency expressed by dreamers. The main reason for concern here is, I take it, due to the combination of (i) the seeming psychological differences between dreaming and waking subjects as manifested, inter alia, in the agency of the Dream Self, for example, the dreamer apparently forms an intention to cheat but would never do such a thing in waking life, and (ii) a psychological view of diachronic personal identity:<sup>17</sup>

*Psychological Theory*: Person A at time *t* is numerically identical with Person B if and only if B is uniquely psychologically continuous with A (see Parfit 1984).

13. <https://www.dreambank.net/>.

14. <https://sleepanddreamdatabase.org/>.

15. See M. Rosen (2021c) for a similar observation.

16. This is apparently complemented by evidence that motor areas of the brain are activated in REM sleep associated with dreams most like virtual realities. See Hobson et al. (2000: 826).

17. The objection doesn't get off the ground if we assume a *Physical Theory* of personal identity which require physical rather than psychological continuity (see Thomson 1997). Dreaming and waking subjects will typically be physically continuous, e.g., sharing the same body.

The key term here is *psychological continuity*. Proponents characterise this in terms of overlapping chains of strong psychological connectedness. Strong connectedness requires direct psychological connections obtaining over time, such as the preservation of memory beliefs and desires. For strong connectedness, a threshold of direct psychological connections must hold. Parfit suggests these are “at least half the number that hold, over every day, in the lives of nearly every actual person” (1984: 206).

Given the relatively short time lapse between the activities of the dreaming and waking subject, establishing numerical identity between them will normally require strong psychological connectedness. Strong psychological connectedness may anyway be necessary for establishing that dream blameworthiness persists into waking life (*diachronic* blameworthiness), as Dream Responsibility requires. This is because some hold that mere psychological continuity (and numerical identity in general) is insufficient for diachronic blameworthiness (see Khoury & Matheson 2018). Instead, we may require something like the preservation of relevant distinctive psychological features such as cares and values.

Here is a tentative case for thinking that the relevant kind of strong psychological connectedness between dreaming and waking subjects sometimes holds.

First, although there are often apparent psychological disparities between dreaming and waking subjects, it isn’t implausible to characterise these as a failure of the dreamer to *access* the relevant states—such as beliefs—of the waking subject rather than a failure of retention. Such disparities wouldn’t evidence psychological disconnectedness.

Second, there is the widely endorsed Continuity Hypothesis of dream content which holds that dream contents reflect, and are dramatisations of, the conceptions and concerns of the waking subject (Domhoff 2017). In some cases, it seems that the dreamer (through the Dream Self) is animated by the concerns of the waking subject.<sup>18</sup> For instance, dreamers sometimes attempt to address personal problems from waking life (Barrett 2017),<sup>19</sup> and reports often suggest that dreamers share the same moral values as waking subjects, for example,

PROSTITUTION: I am sitting in the driver’s seat of a car. But we are not moving. A man is annoying me. I watch as another man is given the choice of having a thirteen year old prostitute. He shrugs and says sure, why not. I am very upset with him and think he is immoral and insensitive. I am

18. Parfit requires that the attitudes be connected in the *right kind of way*, i.e., in a nondeviant causal chain. Establishing this condition for dreams is a task for (at least) another paper.

19. Barrett notes, however, that it is more typical that a pre-made “solution” to waking problems is presented to the Dream Self rather than it being worked through in the dream.

angry. I want to protect the girl. (Barb Sanders #2: #3149 (1997-03-12) Accessed on 13/01/2023 from DreamBank)

To clarify: assuming that the relevant waking subject is normal, I take it that it's very plausible that they share the relevant moral values expressed in PROSTITUTION.

While none of the foregoing is decisive, we are now in a better position to appreciate Dream Responsibility: if subjects *qua* dreamers sometimes express agency while they dream, for example, in a dream like CHEATING, then then they may be morally blameworthy for that agency, and this may persist into waking life.<sup>20</sup> Thus, subjects *qua* waking subjects will be fitting objects of what Strawson (1962) called “reactive attitudes” of indignation, anger, etc.<sup>21</sup>

## 2. The Morally Innocuous Status of Dreaming?

Before proceeding to fully defend Dream Responsibility, I address a worry about its significance: even if Dream Responsibility is true, it has no interesting implications because what we do while dreaming is never wrong, etc., but is only ever morally permissible. Given this, and the claim that one cannot be blamed for performing merely morally permissible actions, the potential for moral praise and blameworthiness of waking subjects for what they do while dreaming is never actualised. Compare with the act of leafing through the pages of your copy of *Interpretation of Dreams*. This is an expression of agency where, let's assume, conditions for moral responsibility are met. But it has little moral consequence, given the merely permissible quality of the action. Perhaps expressions of agency while dreaming are always like that. If so, the significance of Dream Responsibility is greatly diminished.

While I lack space to definitively respond, I here try to assuage this concern.

On the model of agency underpinning the antecedent of Dream Responsibility, subjects unknowingly inhabit a dream world which they practically navigate by forming intentions, making choices, etc. These expressions of agency will be morally assessable on a range of moral theories. Let me briefly explain.

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20. If one denies moral luck—e.g., Khoury (2018)—then intending to cheat is morally equivalent to actual cheating. Hence Dream Responsibility would entail moral parity between some dreamers and waking cheaters.

21. Due to space constraints, my discussion of Dream Responsibility focuses on blameworthiness. Although there may be some respects in which conditions for praise are less demanding than for blame, e.g., perhaps only blame requires the ability to do otherwise, I remain open to the idea that requirements for praise may be more demanding in other respects, e.g., perhaps only praise requires being attuned to the True and the Good. See, e.g., Wolf (1980) for discussion.

Consider, first, a Kantian view according to which willed intentions are wrong if they express disrespect for the value of humanity. If subjects form intentions while dreaming, such as the intention to cheat, the intention disrespects humanity and constitutes a moral wrong. That the objects of such intentions are merely dreamt makes no obvious difference to their moral quality. One reason for this is that the content of an intention to cheat while nonlucidly dreaming seems to be the same as a wrongful intention to engage in that act in waking life. Absent convincing reason to think otherwise, such intentions will be morally assessable.<sup>22</sup>

It's plausible that some expressions of agency while dreaming will be a manifestation of subjects' character or will succeed or fail to live up to the demands of virtuous agency, and hence will be morally assessable on some Virtue Ethical views (e.g., Slote 2001). For support, readers should reconsider the evidence from the Section 1 concerning diachronic personal identity such as the Continuity Hypothesis.

Finally, consider a Consequentialist view according to which token choices are morally wrong if they produce bad outcomes, for example, actual harm. Now consider empirical evidence that what tentatively suggests that what we do while dreaming<sup>23</sup> has waking consequences (perhaps even systematic ones). For instance, Selterman et al. (2014) shows that dreamt infidelity predicts relationship conflict in waking life.<sup>24</sup> Assuming that such conflict is bad, this is evidence for moral wrongness by the lights of some Consequentialist theories.<sup>25</sup> It might be objected that the consequences of what we do while dreaming could differ quite dramatically from waking life. For instance, perhaps choosing to engage in violent acts while dreaming may sometimes have good consequences in waking life by acting as a kind of release for repressed desires. But this would merely show that moral assessment while dreaming can diverge from waking life. It doesn't undermine the claim that what we do while dreaming can be morally assessable.

Although much more could be said, I hope to have assuaged the concern that dreams are morally innocuous.

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22. A similar line of argument applies, *mutatis mutandis*, to other theories of moral evaluation which focus on psychological states, e.g., subjective consequentialism and its focus on *expected utility*.

23. Given the background assumption that agency is expressed while dreaming in the relevant cases.

24. Erlacher and Schredl (2010) provide evidence that dream actions (in lucid dreaming) can result in skill acquisition. The relevance for nonlucid dreaming is unclear.

25. See Cowan (2023) for a fuller argument. This is also relevant to some Virtue Consequentialist views.

### 3. Competence

Moral responsibility seems to require competence. If Dr Evil controls my actions, then, assuming that I'm not culpable for being under her control, I'm not responsible or blameworthy for what I do. In the following sections I argue that sometimes dreamers are competent while dreaming and that others may be culpably incompetent.

#### 3.1. Competence While Dreaming

To assess Dream Responsibility, we need a conception of competence. I discuss three as a representative sample. First,

*Identificationism*: S is competent with respect to expression of agency, A, just in case A is attributable to motives that S *identifies with* or *stands behind*.

For instance, S's action is motivated by a desire that S *desires* to have (Frankfurt 1971) or reflects S's values (Watson 1975).<sup>26</sup>

Second,

*Reasons-Responsiveness*: S is competent with respect to expression of agency, A, just in case A was produced by S's own<sup>27</sup> moderately reason-responsive mechanism (Fischer & Ravizza 1998).

For instance, S's action is produced by the mechanism of *practical reason* which (i) displays an understandable pattern of reasons recognition (including moral reasons) across a range of scenarios, both actual and hypothetical, and (ii) would produce an alternative to A in at least one relevantly similar scenario in which there was sufficient reason do other than A.

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26. Wolf (1990) doesn't regard what I've called *Identificationist* views as targeting *competence*. Note also that *Attributionists* claim that expressions of agency which meet something like this condition are *sufficient* for moral responsibility (e.g., Smith 2005). Nothing in my argument hinges upon these complications.

27. To be the agent's *own* the agent believes themselves to be an agent, and to be an apt target for reactive attitudes, while acting from the mechanism. There are doubtless subjects who regard mechanisms operative while dreaming as their own, e.g., proponents of the Orthodoxy, nonexperts who endorse something similar. It is easy to find Web articles reassuring people about feeling guilty for infidelity dreams. See, e.g., <https://www.kalanitbenari.com/post/i-cheated-on-my-partner-in-my-dream-should-i-feel-guilty>.

Finally,

*Libertarianism*: S is competent with respect to expression of agency, A, at time t, just in case S had the ability to do other than A at t (see Kane 2007<sup>28</sup>).

For instance, holding fixed the conditions of the Universe prior to t, S could have chosen not to perform A at t. Note that Libertarians normally regard a kind of reason-responsiveness underpinning action as a necessary but not sufficient condition for competence.

With these theories in mind, I now consider evidence from neuropsychology that apparently threatens the claim that subjects are ever competent while dreaming.

Consider, first, neuropsychological evidence. Although dreaming shouldn't be identified with REM sleep, dreams that are most like virtual realities, where agency is most likely expressed, tend to occur in REM sleep.<sup>29</sup> It's therefore of interest that the REM brain undergoes a distinctive neurochemical modulation. The normal waking brain is marked by a balance between aminergic neurotransmitters (such as noradrenaline and serotonin) and cholinergic neurotransmitters (such as acetylcholine), with the balance in favour of the former. While amines are "essential to the processes that enable us to direct attention, reason things through, and decide to act" (Clark 2007: 8), when cholines dominate "emotional and analogical reasoning begin to dominate, and critical control and judgment wane" (2007: 8). Crucially, the REM brain is "aminergically demodulated and, reciprocally, cholinergically hypermodulated" (Hobson 2009: 810).

This modulation complements a distinctive pattern of brain (de)activation in REM sleep. Positron emission tomography and fMRI findings evidence a shift in regional blood flow away from the dorsolateral prefrontal cortex (DLPFC) to subcortical limbic structures such as the amygdala. This is significant, because the DLPFC is the "executive brain" which helps us to "organise our thinking, critically assess our own gut responses and main-

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28. Note that Kane's actual view is weaker than Libertarianism. A robust ability to do otherwise is only required for *self-forming* actions, which are those performed at "difficult times of life when we are torn between competing visions of what we should do or become" (2007: 11) and shape one's future character. An act can otherwise be competent if it is the result of a character than has been shaped by self-forming actions. If we assumed Kane's weaker (and arguably more plausible) version of Libertarianism, then competence while dreaming only requires that agency while dreaming is shaped by the dreamer's character (assuming those are sometimes themselves shaped by self-forming actions). See evidence from Section 1 in support.

29. See Hobson (2009) and M. Rosen (2021b).

tain at least a modicum of top-down control” (Clark 2007: 4) and is associated with control of willed actions (Jahanshahi & Frith 1998). The limbic system, on the other hand, is linked to analogical and associative thinking, and emotion.

With this neuropsychological picture in mind, Hobson (1999: 44) observes that the REM brain is like that of someone who is delirious or psychotic. This is important, because we might doubt that someone in this condition could act from desires they stand behind, or from reasons-responsive mechanisms, or have the capacity to do otherwise.

However, there are several reasons to think the neuropsychological evidence is insufficient to establish that subjects are always incompetent while dreaming. First, we should avoid simply reading off psychological facts about agency and cognition from facts about neurophysiology. Coarse-grained physiological facts make certain agential and cognitive manifestations more likely without guaranteeing them. While the data may ground generalisations about agency while dreaming, it’s doubtful that it justifies claims about each token instance. Second, some evidence suggests that the REM brain is heterogeneous, for example, Kubota et al. (2011) identify DLPFC *activation* during REM sleep. While this may be linked to dream lucidity (see below for more), it’s consistent with the evidence that the activation subserves higher cognitive functioning in nonlucid dreaming.

Third, the ventromedial prefrontal cortex (VMPFC) remains active during, and is plausibly necessary for, dreaming (Solms 1997). This is significant because the VMPFC is thought to be implicated in reward or value (including moral value) based decision-making, emotional regulation, and social cognition (Hiser & Koenigs 2018). Impairments have profound impacts on emotional regulation and decision making. Thus, its activation during dreaming provides pause for thinking that ‘higher’ brain functions are absent. Finally, the activation of emotional centres isn’t straightforward evidence against reason-responsiveness. Indeed, a mainstream view of emotions regards them as perceptions or cognitions of values/reasons, serving crucial practical and epistemic functions (Tappolet 2016).

It might be objected that the neuropsychological evidence against competence can be bolstered by dream reports. A perusal of dream report databases reveals that the Dream Self is very often caught up in the erratic flow of events, rather than being capable of controlled engagement, for example, search the keyword “suddenly” for examples. This might suggest that the subject’s choices aren’t guided by motivational states they stand behind, or by reasons-responsive mechanisms, or are such that they could have done otherwise. As Windt and Metzinger (2007: 201) summarise, “volitional control of dream *behaviour* . . . tends to be extremely weak during the [non-lucid] dream state.”

However, some reports suggest otherwise. Consider this from Augustine:

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? (*Confessions*, quoted in Matthews 1981: 48, emphasis added)

If taken at face value, it seems that Augustine is reporting that sometimes his agency while dreaming is guided by motives that are aligned with his values, or by a mechanism that is reasons-responsive (there is one relevantly similar scenario where there is reason to do otherwise and the mechanism produces the alternative), or is such that he could do otherwise while dreaming. Indeed, entering the keywords “resist” and “tempted” into DreamBank of reports reveals multiple similar examples.

An objector might point instead to reports suggesting that dreamers are oblivious to the *bizarreness* of dreams, that is, to the occurrence of incongruous, impossible, or improbable events.<sup>30</sup> Although they aren’t obviously relevant to Identificationism, these reports may indicate that subjects are at best *erratically* registering the presence of reasons and hence that they are not acting from reason-responsive mechanisms (recall that Libertarians may regard this as a necessary condition).<sup>31</sup> But subjects aren’t always unresponsive to bizarreness. For instance, in prelucid dreams, subjects notice incongruities and wonder whether they are dreaming, before subsequently deciding that they are not (Green 1968). Further, memory-deficits may be responsible for many cases of subjects’ seeming obliviousness to bizarreness. For instance, if I currently lack access to the memory that a relative is dead, then encountering them in a dream won’t clearly be a reason for me to investigate that something odd is going on.<sup>32</sup> Finally, many theorists—see Domhoff (2007)—think dream bizarreness isn’t typical and that dreams are normally accurate reflections of waking life. It’s thus far from clear that an appeal to dream bizarreness provides reason to deny that dreamers are ever competent while dreaming.

Someone might instead point to reports suggesting that subjects perform egregious wrongs in dreams in such a fashion as to make us doubt that they are acting in ways guided by their values, from reason-responsive mechanisms, or could have done otherwise. For instance,

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30. Hobson et al. (2000) argue that bizarreness is a “formal” feature of dreams.

31. See Arpaly and Schroeder (2013: 252).

32. M. Rosen (2018) argues that bizarreness ratings often miss important contextual factors.

OVERREACTION: Marci is noisy and bothersome. She won't stop talking and I am very upset. My friends Mirabelle and Lucy (maybe Rochelle as well) agree to kill her for me. It seems the only way to shut her up. (Barb Sanders: #2235 (1992-09-17). Accessed on 13/01/2023 from DreamBank)

But this is far from decisive. Consider, for instance, a continuation of the same report:

OVERREACTION: I feel bad and decide it's best to turn ourselves in with her so she can get help. It was wrong to try to kill her. I agree to take the full blame and I say I will tell the authorities that I killed her and shot the gun myself.

So, while subjects act *against* moral reasons while dreaming, reports suggest that they often recognise them and sometimes act in accordance with them.<sup>33</sup>

In sum, the evidence for the claim that subjects are always incompetent while dreaming is far from sufficient. I now briefly argue positively (and tentatively) that there are cases of competence while nonlucidly dreaming.

Lucid dreams are those in which subjects are consciously aware they are dreaming (LaBerge et al. 1981; Voss & Hobson 2015). Lucid dreamers often report enhanced cognitive and volitional capacities comparable to those found in waking life (M. Rosen 2021a). Such claims are complemented by neurophysiological evidence that lucid dreaming is underwritten by a distinctive neurophysiology and that, importantly, the DLPFC is reactivated (Dresler et al. 2012) compared to ordinary nonlucid dreams. Although much more would need to be said, lucid dreams appear to be good candidates for competence while dreaming.

But, of course, Dream Responsibility concerns nonlucid dreams. In support, I focus on a type of nonlucid dream often reported as co-occurring with lucid dreaming, for example, following or leading into a lucid dream. These are *false awakenings* (Buzzi 2019) in which dreaming subjects seemingly awaken in the waking subject's normal surroundings, believe they are awake, and go about their usual business apparently motivated by the same attitudes as the waking subject.<sup>34</sup> Importantly, some subjects report being capable of engaging in ratio-

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33. Reports indicate that dream emotions—which are regarded by many theorists as recognitions of reasons—are common (appearing in about 50% of dream reports and are often of the same type as those waking subjects would token while responding to similar objects [Strauch & Meier 1996]).

34. These are Type I false awakenings. Type II are marked by anxiety and a nightmarish quality. Type I cases also support diachronic personal identity between dreamers and waking subjects (see Section 1).

nal thought (Windt & Metzinger 2007), metacognition (Buzzi 2019), and self-control similar to that found in waking life (M. Rosen 2012: 93).<sup>35</sup>

On the neurophysiological side there is evidence of similar brain activation (as measured in EEG) between lucid dreams and false awakenings (Buzzi 2019 citing Takeuchi et al. 1994). In lucid dreams “such activated EEG pattern has been paired with a reactivation of brain areas that are deactivated during normal REM sleep” (Buzzi 2019: 334–35). This, of course, includes the DLPFC (Dresler et al. 2012). Buzzi (2019) also hypothesises that there may be a neurochemical modulation in false awakenings like that in lucid dreaming. Elsewhere, Voss and Hobson (2015) are sympathetic to there being similarities in brain profile between lucid dreaming and false awakenings.

Of course, empirical study of false awakenings is at a very early stage and much more needs exploring. But based on the current tentative evidence some cases of false awakenings are good candidates for cases in which subjects are competent while dreaming.

### 3.2. *Culpable Incompetence While Dreaming*

Even if subjects are always incompetent while they dream, this doesn’t undermine Dream Responsibility. Perhaps incompetence merely reduces, rather than eliminates, responsibility (see Sosa 2005). But it’s plausible that subjects avoid responsibility if they are non-culpable for their incompetence while dreaming.<sup>36</sup>

I now argue that sometimes, subjects are *culpably* incompetent while dreaming.

Consider, first, a clear non-dreaming case of culpable incompetence:

DRUNK CHEATER: Johnny is married with two children. He isn’t an alcoholic, but he enjoys drinking to excess. One day he goes to a bar and intentionally drinks most of a bottle of a whisky for some enjoyable escapism. While inebriated he has a one-night stand with a stranger.

Despite being inebriated Johnny is culpably incompetent, and hence blameworthy, for wrongfully cheating. A popular and very plausible approach to explaining cases of culpable incompetence—the *tracing* account (see, e.g., Fischer &

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35. Admittedly, Buzzi (2019) reports that most subjects reported metacognitive activity but an *absence* of self-control. However, commenting on Buzzi (2019), Carr (2019) thinks that the self-control in false awakenings may simply be more mundane and not of the *magical* kind that sometimes occurs in lucid dreaming. See her “False Awakenings in Lucid Dreamers” <https://www.psychologytoday.com/gb/blog/dream-factory/201912/false-awakenings-in-lucid-dreamers>.

36. Both Sosa (2005) and Smuts (2015) overlook this. See also Soteriou (2020).

Ravizza 1998: 50–51)—characterises cases of culpable incompetence as those where an incompetent expression of agency is suitably related to an earlier competent one. In *DRUNK CHEATER*, there is a clear sense in which Johnny’s intentional act of drinking alcohol for enjoyable escapism (presumably with awareness that he will be incompetent while drunk) is suitably related to his later incompetent act of cheating and grounds blameworthiness.

I claim that some cases of agency while dreaming are instances of culpable incompetence, that is, some cases of apparently wrongful but incompetent agency while dreaming are suitably related to earlier responsible agency such that the relevant subjects are indirectly blameworthy for their expression of agency while dreaming. To defend this, I argue that some dreaming examples are relevantly analogous to *DRUNK CHEATER*. Consider:

*DREAM CHEATER*: Jimmy is married with two children. One day, he intentionally goes to sleep and to dream for enjoyable escapism. While dreaming he agrees to have a one-nightstand with an apparent stranger.

I defend the analogy via replies to a series of objections which attempt to identify relevant disanalogies between the cases (the reader has perhaps already thought of some!).

Before doing so, I consider a challenge to my proposed line of argument. Following Kant, it might be argued that if a subject is incompetent then they are incapable of wrongdoing because they are no longer an agent.<sup>37</sup> On this account, in *DRUNK CHEATER* Johnny doesn’t do anything wrong or indirectly blameworthy when he cheats; instead, it is only his competent act of getting drunk that was blameworthy and wrongful. So, even if I can establish an analogy between *DRUNK* and *DREAM CHEATER* this would not support Dream Responsibility. I have two replies. First, even if I accept this Kantian point, my argument by analogy would, if successful, establish the conclusion that, sometimes subjects are blameworthy *for attempting to go to sleep/to dream* (for reasons that will soon become clear). Although not equivalent to the consequent of Dream Responsibility it is nevertheless a striking conclusion. Second, I think we can resist the Kantian thought for at least some cases of incompetence. That is, we should distinguish some cases of incompetence (drunken or dreaming) in which subjects lack competence necessary for responsibility but *are still agents* in virtue of their ability to form intentions, etc. So long as at least some cases of drunkenness and dreaming are like this—which isn’t implausible—then this opens space for incompetent wrongdoing on the Kantian theory.

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37. See Kant’s *Metaphysics of Morals* and chapter 19 of Stohr (2022) for helpful discussion of Kant’s views.

With this worry addressed, I now defend the analogy between DRUNK and DREAM CHEATER.

*Objection 1: There is no suitably related expression of competent agency in DREAM CHEATER*

On one version of this objection, sleep and dreaming are driven by basic urges; we all *must* go to sleep, and hence to dream, in the sense that we are driven to sleep by a basic urge which is manifested in tiredness and fatigue. The involvement of this basic urge in going to sleep undermines the claim that the subject in DREAM CHEATER is competent when they go to sleep. There is therefore a disanalogy with DRUNK CHEATER (Johnny isn't an alcoholic so we needn't think his decision is driven by an urge).

Even if this point about the connection between urges and competence were true, we can sidestep the issue. Just as it's false that all decisions to eat and drink are driven by a basic *urge* (which manifests in feelings of hunger and thirst), for example, as when one consumes merely for enjoyment, it's false that going to sleep is always driven by the urge to sleep. Some simply enjoy sleeping and dreaming or do so for escapism.<sup>38</sup> Long lie-ins and naps for the purposes of dreaming are pastimes for some. Thus, we could amend DREAM CHEATER such that it makes clear that Jimmy's decision to go to sleep is not driven by tiredness.

A more sophisticated version of this objection denies that Jimmy could intentionally go to sleep or to dream (despite the description). So, in DREAM CHEATER there is no earlier expression of responsible agency that their agency while dreaming could relate to, and therefore a disanalogy with DRUNK CHEATER.

In more detail: some philosophers think that for S to perform an intentional action, A, S must *know how* to perform A (Sliwa 2017). This condition rules out the possibility that someone could intentionally *win the lottery* (as opposed to cheating). Knowing-how to perform A plausibly requires reliability in success, and perhaps also counterfactual robustness (Hawley 2003). Applied to the cases at hand: while subjects know how to drink lots of alcohol—for example, they can do things that reliably bring this about—they don't know how to go to sleep or to dream. Therefore, subjects cannot intentionally go to sleep or dream.

One response is simply to deny that intentional action is the only way in which competent agency is expressed. Perhaps habitual action, or action directly motivated by experience are counterexamples (see Döring 2003). But let's grant, for the sake of argument, that it's crucial that there be an earlier intentional action in DREAM CHEATER. Against this objection, it seems reasonably clear that

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38. The internet is awash with suggestions for techniques to increase dream recall (e.g., setting multiple alarms). A principal motivation seems to be to better enjoy dreams. Thanks to an anonymous referee for this point.

most people *do* know-how to go to sleep: lie down, close your eyes in a comfortable position, relax your muscles, do whatever else you need to do, etc. This is, for many, reliable in producing sleep, and is counterfactually robust. And sleep reliably produces dreaming, with dreams occurring about 4–6 times per night.<sup>39</sup>

It might be objected that even if some subjects know how to sleep, this doesn't ground know-how with respect to dreaming. Compare with the relationship between smoking and lung cancer. Smokers clearly know how to smoke, but despite the reliable connection with cancer, it seems odd to say that they know how to get lung cancer. Hence, even if we can intentionally go to sleep, this is insufficient for intentional dreaming.

In reply, even if subjects don't know how to dream, they know how to make it likely that they will dream: they go to sleep, avoid taking certain drugs, perhaps ingest other substances, etc. This is enough to ground an amended DREAM CHEATER, the distinctive features of which don't constitute a morally relevant difference with DRUNK CHEATER.

The objector might respond that, for there to be a suitable relationship between the earlier responsible expression of agency and the incompetent agency while dreaming, the subject in DREAM CHEATER must intentionally make it likely that they have a dream with a *particular content*, for example, like that in CHEATING. Without this, there is only an apparent similarity with DRUNK CHEATER. But surely subjects are not able to intentionally make it likely that they will have dreams with a particular content.

I am doubtful that the inability to intentionally have dreams with a particular content would undermine the analogy with DRUNK CHEATER. But even if it would, it's anyway far from obvious that no-one knows how to make it likely that they'll have dreams with a particular content. There are, of course, lucid dreams which people can be trained to induce with some reasonable degree of reliability. For instance, subjects can train themselves such that they can make it likely that they'll have lucid dreams in which they perform pre-arranged tasks (LaBerge 1980). Aside from lucid dreams, there is the well-known phenomenon of waking up from nonlucid dreaming, intentionally trying to re-enter the dream, and for this attempt to be successful (see, e.g., Flanagan 2000: 180–81 for a personal description of deliberate re-entry into a dream about Marilyn Monroe). A browse of the internet reveals subjects proffering different techniques for doing so, such as a version of the *Dream Exit Induced Lucid Dream* technique.<sup>40</sup> Taking such reports at face value (somewhat warily!) I don't think that it is implausible that some of those subjects know how to make it likely that they will re-enter a dream with a particular content. This—along with the descriptions of such

39. See William Domhoff's Dreams Q&A <https://dreams.ucsc.edu/FAQ/#top>.

40. E.g., <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xIkP-GuhcLs> [accessed 13/01/2023].

cases as involving an attempt to carry out an intention—provides support for the claim that they can intentionally do so. Thus, even assuming this very demanding requirement for indirect responsibility, a suitably amended version of DREAM CHEATER—where Jimmy intentionally re-enters a dream—will plausibly meet it.

*Objection 2: Sleeping/dreaming has a special function that always exculpates.*

One version of this objection is that we *need* to go to sleep/dream in the sense that it's necessary for the well-functioning of the organism, for example, that sleep deprivation is linked to Alzheimer's and obesity (Walker 2017). Given this role, the subject in DREAM CHEATER has an excuse for going to sleep/to dream, one that's lacking in DRUNK CHEATER.

However, just as it's false that all decisions to eat and drink are essential for the proper functioning of the organism, for example, consumption of a six-course meal, it's false that all decisions to sleep or dream are essential for proper functioning, for example, taking a nap, re-entering a dream for enjoyment. Appealing to the fact that, *in general*, sleep/dreaming is essential for proper functioning also doesn't provide a blanket exculpation. Eating and drinking are also, in general, essential for proper functioning of the organism, yet this doesn't exculpate each token instance. If it did, then no-one could ever be blameworthy for knowingly eating animal products that were the result of torture. That's false. By analogy, we should say the same about going to sleep or to dream.

An objector might instead appeal to some other function of dreaming, for example, a social or moral function (see Revonsuo & Valli 2015). But not all instances of dreaming will serve this function, for example, dreams that have been re-entered for fun may count as a malfunction, and hence this alleged exculpatory factor will be absent.

*Objection 3: Culpable incompetence always involves actual consequences.*

Paradigmatic culpable incompetence cases such as DRUNK CHEATER are ones in which the later incompetent act produces an actual consequence such as psychological or physical harm. It's *this* consequence for which the subjects are culpable. But in DREAM CHEATER there is no actual harm for Jimmy to be responsible for, and so a disanalogy with DRUNK CHEATER.

In reply, note first that it's plausible that some dreams produce actual harms (see, e.g., the Selterman et al. 2014 study from Section 2). Second, if we don't assume the truth of a version of Consequentialism that focuses on the consequences of token acts, then it's plausible that culpable incompetence cases don't require actual consequences.<sup>41</sup> For instance, suppose that DRUNK CHEATER were

41. See also Flummer (2016) for defence.

amended such that Johnny only attempted, or intended, to cheat on his partner while drunk. On at least some moral theories this would count as a wrongful and blameworthy expression of agency. And this will be explained in terms of culpable incompetence, that is, by appeal to the connection between the incompetent formation of intention with the earlier competent act of getting drunk. So, the objection fails to establish a clear disanalogy.

*Objection 4: No one reasonably believes that they will act incompetently while dreaming.*

While Johnny will have reasonably believed that drinking lots of alcohol will lead him to later act incompetently, Jimmy won't have these beliefs. This is a relevant disanalogy.

In reply, note first that some people clearly believe that they express agency while they are asleep, for example, proponents of the Orthodoxy, other theories of dreaming, and nonexperts believe this. And it isn't just theorists like Hobson who think that we might be in some sense *psychotic* while we dream. It's part of common thinking about dreams that subjects are normally "out of their minds". Further, we are here assuming that these beliefs about dreaming are *true*. It doesn't seem implausible that such true beliefs could be reasonably held by theorists and nonexperts alike.

In conclusion, even if subjects are always incompetent while dreaming (which I've argued against), sometimes they will be *culpably* incompetent and hence indirectly meet competence conditions for responsibility.

## 4. Awareness

Moral responsibility seems to require relevant awareness. If Dr Evil is unaware that prescribing a particular drug causes harm, then, assuming that she isn't culpable for this ignorance, she isn't responsible or blameworthy for injury caused.

Here I argue that dreamers sometimes directly meet awareness conditions for responsibility. Even if they don't, they may sometimes be culpably ignorant and hence meet the condition directly.

### 4.1. Awareness While Dreaming

There is debate about the relevant kind of awareness required for moral responsibility. As with competence, there are numerous theories. To keep discussion tractable, I discuss just two representative accounts. First, there is:

*Weak:* S has awareness necessary for moral responsibility with respect to act, A, if and only if S believes (either occurrently, or in a way that makes the relevant information “personally available” [Levy 2014: 33] such that it could be “effortlessly and easily” brought to mind) that (i) A is of a relevant type, (ii) A has a moral status (de re) (Levy 2014), (iii) A will likely have certain consequences, (iv) there are alternative courses of action available to her.

For instance, Dr Evil avoids responsibility for harming the patient if she didn’t believe that the drug was harmful.

Second, there is:

*Strong:* S has awareness necessary for moral responsibility with respect to act, A, if and only if S occurrently knows (Ginet 2000) that (i) A is of a relevant type (Sliwa 2017), (ii) A has a particular moral status (de dicto) (Sliwa 2017), and, (iii) A will likely have certain consequences (Fischer & Tognazzini 2009), (iv) there are alternative courses of action available to her.

For instance, Dr Evil could avoid blame for harming their patient if she merely had justified true beliefs about (rather than occurrent knowledge of) what she was doing under the description *prescribing a harmful drug*, etc.

Here are some propositions subjects will be ignorant of while dreaming in the sense of *not* believing—at least not occurrently or in a way that’s personally available—them (hence lacking knowledge).

First, recall that while nonlucidly dreaming, subjects don’t believe *that they are dreaming*. Hence, subjects typically don’t believe *that the characters they interact with and their environment in the dream are unreal*. Second, they will often lack occurrent beliefs about certain autobiographical propositions, for example, *that they are a philosopher, that they are married, that their grandparents are dead*.

Perhaps there are cases where subjects’ ignorance morally exculpates. For instance, if a subject can’t easily access their autobiographical belief *that they are in a sexually exclusive relationship*, then what would otherwise count as intentional cheating may not be such.

To be more precise, consider awareness while dreaming given Weak. That subjects are prone to systematically false beliefs about what they are doing while dreaming does not undermine moral responsibility. If a subject falsely believes—either occurrently or in a way that makes the content personally available—*that they are cheating, that this is wrong, that it will likely upset relevant people*, then this could be sufficient to meet the first three conditions of awareness. Given

that subjects often report lacking control in non-lucid dreams<sup>42</sup> it's perhaps less plausible that they will typically have beliefs about the availability of alternative courses of action. But if they sometimes do, Weak implies that subjects may have requisite awareness for moral responsibility while dreaming.

Now consider subjects' ignorance while dreaming according to Strong. Insofar as subjects form beliefs about what they are doing while dreaming, these will tend to be *false*, for example, *that I am cheating*, etc. Hence, they are relevantly ignorant. However, despite their general metacognitive deficiency, subjects may occasionally form true beliefs with the content *I am trying to X*. But 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. Given Strong, subjects are relevantly ignorant while dreaming.

But both Weak and Strong arguably need emendation. Most philosophers think that ignorance can only exculpate when the action, A, was performed *from* such ignorance, as opposed to merely being performed *while* the subject was ignorant. That is, the ignorance must have played "an important causal or explanatory role in the agent actually performing the act in question" (Guerrero 2007: 63) such that they would have acted differently had they possessed the relevant awareness. Without this condition, S could avoid moral responsibility due to ignorance, but where the ignorance didn't play a causal role in explaining the action. For instance, if Dr Evil didn't know that she was prescribing a harmful drug, this would only exculpate if her action was performed *from* ignorance of this fact, that is, *if they had known about the harm then they wouldn't have prescribed the drug*. If Dr Evil would have prescribed the drug anyway then they merely act *in* ignorance which doesn't exculpate.

Let's assume that subjects are ignorant while dreaming in the sense that they don't *know* what they are doing. To assess whether they acted *from* (and not merely *in*) ignorance, we need to evaluate the following subjunctive conditional: *if the subject did know what they were doing, then they wouldn't have performed the action*. The conditional concerns whether the subject would refrain from, for example, attempting to cheat, in a way that's wrongful, etc. were they to have known what they were doing. Now, while this will be true for many subjects, for some it will be false: if they knew what they were doing they would have performed this action. This might be because they would engage in such acts in waking life were the chance to arise. For those subjects, they merely act in ignorance, rather than from it, thus meeting awareness conditions for moral responsibility.

So, despite the epistemic deficits of dreaming subjects, it's plausible that they sometimes possess relevant awareness while dreaming.

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42. See Voss et al. (2013) for evidence that subjects have thoughts about what they are doing while dreaming.

#### 4.2. Culpable Ignorance While Dreaming

Suppose I'm mistaken. Perhaps acting *in* ignorance can exculpate (see G. Rosen 2008). As with competence, there are good grounds for thinking that subjects could sometimes be *culpably* ignorant while dreaming. Once again, I argue by analogy.

Consider a non-dreaming example of culpable ignorance:

DRUGGED CHEATER: Johnny is married with two children. For escapism he enjoys taking a new drug, *Amnex*, which renders subjects temporarily ignorant with respect to some autobiographical facts and the likely consequences of certain actions but retains their competence. He does this despite knowing that it risks his committing wrongful actions. While intoxicated he forgets, *inter alia*, that he is married with children and has a one-night stand with a stranger.

Despite being ignorant of the fact that he is married, Johnny is culpably ignorant, and hence blameworthy for wrongfully cheating. On a widely held account of culpable ignorance, it requires that a subject's ignorance is the result of them performing or failing to perform some earlier blameworthy action (see Weiland 2017 for discussion). In DRUGGED CHEATER, given Johnny's reasonable expectation that taking Amnex will lead to him committing wrongful actions, his decision to take the drug is blameworthy. The example is somewhat complicated by the fact that I assume that Johnny merely acts *in* ignorance when he has his one-night stand, that is, his ignorance is not causally explanatory of his acting this way. Nevertheless, it could still be true that taking Amnex significantly increases the risk that he will act wrongly, since there may be other wrongful acts he might perform while intoxicated (and ignorant) that would be performed *from* ignorance.

I claim that a suitably understood version of DREAM CHEATER, wherein the subject is relevantly ignorant rather than (or in addition to) being incompetent, is a case of culpable ignorance. Assuming a Strong conception of awareness, in the amended DREAM CHEATER I assume that the subject acts *in* ignorance in the following ways: they lack occurrent knowledge that they are dreaming, the likely consequences of their actions, the moral status of what they are doing, etc. Unlike DRUGGED CHEATER, I do not, however, assume they are ignorant of the fact that they are married such that their act wouldn't count as attempting to cheat.

Assuming the cogency of my arguments in Section 3.2, the main point of contention is whether subjects could ever be said to be *blameworthy* for being ignorant while dreaming. For an analogy with DRUGGED CHEATER subjects must sometimes have the reasonable expectation that going to sleep/dream will leave them in ignorance such that the probability of their acting wrongfully is significantly raised. As with DRUGGED CHEATER, this could be true even if the specific

wrongful act the dreaming subject commits is performed in ignorance. Plausibly there are such cases. Let me explain.

Among those who believe we sometimes express agency while dreaming, there will be some who are reasonably committed to moral views which entail the existence of wrongful agency while dreaming, given certain contents (recall from Section 2 that this may include a very wide range of moral views). And it is surely reasonable for those subjects to also believe that they will sometimes act *in* ignorance while dreaming. Further, there are at least two kinds of case where subjects could have reasonable expectations that ignorance while dreaming significantly raises the probability of wrongdoing. One is where subjects purposefully re-enter morally compromising dreams, and another is where subjects are prone to dreams with dubious moral content.

It might be objected that there remains a disanalogy with DRUGGED CHEATER. While Johnny *could* have possessed relevant knowledge when confronted with the possibility of a one-night stand (by not taking Amnax), Jimmy is condemned to be in ignorance while dreaming. It makes little sense to say that he *should* have known what he was doing while dreaming.

But there is no disanalogy since lucid dreaming is possible and becoming lucid is a learnable skill (albeit with varying degrees of reliability). For instance, one technique known as *Reality Testing* involves “asking oneself regularly during the day whether one is dreaming or not, and examining the environment for possible incongruences” (Stumbrys et al. 2012: 1467). This habit carries over into dreams. So, for Jimmy, it is possible that he could become aware of what he is doing in DREAM CHEATER. As with Johnny, it might be assumed that this knowledge won’t make any difference to what he does (they are both acting *in* ignorance). However, this must be tempered by the fact that in the lucid dream case, the content of Jimmy’s intentions will plausibly be different, given the knowledge that he is dreaming. For instance, perhaps his intention would change from *intending to cheat* to *intending to cheat in a dream*. On some moral theories there will be a substantial moral difference between these. So, remedying ignorance in DREAM CHEATER by becoming lucid may lead to moral improvement even if Jimmy was merely acting in ignorance.

Thus, even if we assume the minority view that acting in ignorance exculpates, subjects may sometimes be culpably ignorant while dreaming, and hence morally responsible.

This concludes my defence of Dream Responsibility.

## 5. Standing to Blame

It’s widely thought that, even if someone is blameworthy, some agents may lack *standing* to blame them. On a non-consequentialist understand-

ing, while moral agents have a standing to blame blameworthy agents, it's defeasible.

I here consider two challenges to the claim that we possess standing to blame subjects for agency while dreaming. Although orthogonal to Dream Responsibility, if successful the challenges would seem to entail no alteration to our current normative practice.

First, some think that considerations of *privacy* can defeat the standing to blame, that is, that "morality frequently demands that we mind our own business" (Radzick 2011: 575). For instance, if Rachel has little connection to James, except that they work together, she may lack standing to blame him for the infidelities of his that she overheard at the water cooler.

If privacy ever defeats standing to blame surely it will do so with dreams. Dreams are a private world. What we do while dreaming is no-one else's business. Thus, even if subjects are blameworthy for their agency while dreaming, others may always lack standing to blame.

This proposal faces serious problems. First, it's irrelevant to cases of subjects blaming themselves for agency while dreaming, for example, "applying" internal sanctions such as guilt. Second, there is a disanalogy with the standard privacy case: normally, we lack a pre-existing epistemic access to others' dreams that's independent of voluntary dream reports. If reports of agency while dreaming are given voluntarily, does that thereby make it the recipient of the report's business? No, because the recipient may need to be in a special relationship with the subject for example, even if James confides in Rachel about his infidelity, it remains unclear that it is thereby *her* business. But it seems that there will be some cases where such a condition is met, for example, if someone voluntarily confides in their partner about multiple dream infidelities it seems plausible that their agency is also *their* business.

A second way in which a subject might have their standing to blame undermined is due to a kind of *subjunctive hypocrisy* (see Watson 2004). For instance, when we reflect on the immorality of others, we may conclude that it's simply a matter of good fortune—for example, due to upbringing, environment, opportunities—that we haven't committed such actions too. Perhaps that undercuts our standing to blame.

Applied to dreams, the thought is that, given our incompetence and ignorance while dreaming, it's *especially* lucky that any given individual does *not* commit moral wrongs while they dream. Hence, if we are confronted with someone seemingly blameworthy for what they have done while dreaming, we will always lack standing to blame them. Doing so would be an egregious kind of subjunctive hypocrisy.

I make two replies. First, dream contents, and plausibly also agency while dreaming, may often be influenced by cares and conceptions which are them-

selves not simply a matter of luck. Second, some subjects may intentionally influence or even control what they do while dreaming, for example, use of induction techniques to re-enter dreams or have lucid dreams. Hence, it's far from obvious that worries about subjunctive hypocrisy are *always* more acute when it comes to dreams.<sup>43</sup>

## 6. Implications: Practical and Theoretical

I end by highlighting implications of Dream Responsibility.

First, consider the practical implications. Since Dream Responsibility is a conditional claim, it doesn't have practical implications without assuming the antecedent (that sometimes, subjects express agency while dreaming). If there is agency expressed while dreaming (see Section 1 for a limited defence), then there are three practical implications.

First, the most likely candidates for moral responsibility while dreaming are cases of false awakenings (competence) where subjects express agency in a way that they would in waking life if given the chance (awareness), and cases of those who purposefully go to sleep and to dream for enjoyment and who hold certain beliefs about morality and dreams (culpable incompetence/ignorance). While these aren't typical cases, neither are they a tiny minority. Second, my argument suggests a hitherto unrecognised use of lucid dreaming techniques: as a tool for short-circuiting morally compromising dreams, and thus as an aid for agents' moral improvement. Finally, as techniques in lucid dream induction become more reliable, cases of culpable ignorance while dreaming will become more common.

Now consider a theoretical implication. Recall that Sosa and Ichikawa deploy Dream Responsibility as a premise in an argument against Orthodoxy; specifically, the conjunction of these views entails blameworthiness for what we do while dreaming which they regard as an implausible conclusion. They also think this indirectly supports the Imagination theory—according to which dreaming is a form of imagining—since this view allegedly avoids a commitment to blameworthiness for what we while dreaming.

About this there are two things to say. First, one way of reading this paper is as offering support for Sosa and Ichikawa's argument by defending Dream

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43. One might object that we always lack epistemic entitlement to blame subjects for agency while dreaming. Given the unreliability of dream reports, at least outside of laboratory settings (see Windt 2015), won't we always lack justification for believing that subjects are, e.g., culpably incompetent, have committed wrongs while dreaming, etc? Although there are doubtless epistemic barriers, it seems to me that subjects can, in some instances come to have reasonable beliefs about blameworthiness for their own agency while dreaming. I see no obvious reason to deny that this entitlement could be transmitted to other waking subjects.

Responsibility. However, my view is that the paper weakens their argument by indirectly making the consequent of Dream Responsibility seem more credible, for example, that cases of culpable incompetence aren't implausible. Second, and related, if nonlucid dream imaginings are agentive (as Ichikawa 2009 thinks), then my argument for Dream Responsibility may apply to the Imagination theory. While demonstrating this is clearly the job for another paper—one main stumbling block is showing that imaginings of any kind can be right/wrong—let me record my optimism that it can be persuasively argued.<sup>44</sup> If so, then the Imagination theory and Orthodoxy may both be committed to blameworthiness while dreaming. But, as already noted, this isn't problematic. Dream theorists shouldn't be afraid of Dream Responsibility. The realm of moral responsibility may extend further than previously thought.

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